

A SURVEY OF THE HISTORY OF THE FRANKS

by

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

A SURVEY OF THE HISTORY OF THE FRANKS

A DISSERTATION

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by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter I: The Origin of the Franks.....	Page 1
Chapter II: The Franks to the Death of Clovis.....	" 6
Chapter III: The Merovingians.....	" 26
Chapter IV: The Carolingians.....	" 64
Bibliography.....	" 91

MAPS

Frankish and Other Tribes in the Third Century A.D.....	Page 5
Gaul, showing the principal places mentioned in Chapter II.....	" 25
Western Europe at the end of the Merovingian Period.....	" 63
The Carolingian Empire.....	" 90

ILLUSTRATIONS AND TABLES

Germanic Weapons.....	Page 24
Genealogical Table of the Merovingians.....	" 62
Genealogical Table of the Carolingians.....	" 89

I

THE ORIGIN OF THE FRANKS

The Franks belonged to the western branch of the Germanic peoples and were, according to Much, a confederacy comprising the Chamavi, Chattvarii, Amsivarii, Usipii, Tenchteri, Tubantes, Bruchteri, Chatti, Salians and Ripvarii.¹ To these tribes, Schmidt adds the Chasvarii.² According to Gibbon, the formation of this confederacy took place about 240 A.D.³ However, the collective name of "Franks" did not make its first appearance until around 258.⁴ Opinion differs as to the meaning of the term "Frank." The theory that it means "free" has been widely accepted. Meanings such as "defiant" (trotzig), "bold" (kühn), "ferocious", denoting national characteristics, are also suggested.

Der Name Franken ist die zusammenfassende Bezeichnung einer Anzahl, in der Rheingegend ansässiger, längst bekannter Völkerschaften und bedeutet, vielleicht "die Freien" oder "die Trotzig, Kühnen."⁵

O.G. Frankun, Franchon, Vrancun; Germ. Franken; O.E. Froncan; O.N. Frakkar; Lat. Franci (Theoclius, cit. by Vopiscus, third century A.D.); M. Lat. Francones;... Secondary name: Germ. Franzosen, Franzmänner; Engl. Frenchmen; M. Lat. Franciscani; Fr. Français; Ital. Franceschi, Francesi;... Place names: O.H.G. Franconofurt; M. Lat. Villare Francorum, Fr. Villers-Franqueun; Francorcamps, etc. The adjective frank means 'ferocious,' according to the traditional interpretation. (Isidore, Etym. ix, 2 161; Ermold Nigellus, I, 344; cp. O.N. frakkr 'brisk'). The old etymology is preferable to the divergent guesses of modern philologists. The derivation from an alleged old adjective meaning 'free' should be avoided; this signification is secondary, arising from the position of the ruling Franks among the subjected Romans.⁶

Grimm connects the name of the confederacy with a weapon commonly used by the Germanic peoples - a short-bladed iron spear known as

1. Much: Deutsche Stammeskunde, p. 90.

2. Schmidt: Geschichte der germanischen Frühzeit, p. 274.

3. Gibbon: The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. I, p. 307.

4. Schmidt: Geschichte der germanischen Frühzeit, p. 274.

5. Ibid. p. 274

6. Schütte: Our Forefathers the Gothonic Nations, vol. 2, p. 158.

the "framea."

Es ist eine andere ableitung vorgeschlagen worden: aus goth. hramjan figere stamme fränkisches adchramire und (nach wechsel zwischen CH und PH s. 349) adframire, die mishandelte framea, das ags. diminutivum franca (für frameca), daher der name Franken.¹

The original home of the Germanic peoples was, according to Schmidt, the area around the Baltic Sea: the southern part of Sweden, Denmark, Schleswig-Holstein and northern Germany, between the lower Weser and the Oder.² Hirt³ is in complete agreement with Schmidt on this point. Upon examining the available linguistic evidence, Schütte accepts as correct the many legends which claim a Scandinavian origin for the Germanic peoples.

What the stories tell us is this: the Gothonic nations⁴ remember nothing of their origin except that, on the whole, they have expanded southwards from the north. They call their original home Scadinauja, which the Chron. Gothanum translates 'Northland.' At the present day this answers to Scania, but it seems as if the name originally embraced all Denmark or at least included the Danish islands, Ptolemy's 'Lesser Scandic islands.'⁵

At the end of Period I of the Bronze Age (i.e. 1500 B.C. according to Montelius, 1750 according to Kossinna), the migration of the Germanic peoples from their original home began.⁶ These people divided into separate groups. Early in the Iron Age, there appeared three main groups: the western, northern and eastern branches of the Germanic peoples.⁷ To the western branch belonged the tribes which later formed the Frankish confederacy. According

1. Grimm: Geschichte der deutschen Sprache, p. 359.

2. Schmidt: Geschichte der germanischen Frühzeit, p. 6.

3. Hirt: Die Indogermanen, vol. 1, p. 172.

4. "Gothonic nations" is a term of Schütte's own invention, and as used by him, is synonymous with "Germanic peoples."

5. Schütte: Our Forefathers the Gothonic Nations, vol. 1, p. 144.

6. Schmidt: Geschichte der germanischen Frühzeit, p. 21.

7. Schmidt: Geschichte der germanischen Frühzeit, p. 28.

to Schütte, the land around the south-eastern corner of the Zuider Zee was the original home of several of the Frankish tribes: the Salians, Chamavi, Chattvarii and Tubantes. These tribes were bordered on the east by the Chasvarii and Amsivarii.¹ These tribes expanded from their original home until, at the first appearance of the term "Franks" about 258 A.D., the Chamavi occupied the area between the lower Lippe and the Saale, the Salians were in Salland, the Chattvarii on the middle and upper Ruhr, the Bruchteri and Tenchteri between the Ruhr and the Sieg, the Amsivarii on the upper Wupper, and the Usipii and Tubantes between the Sieg and the Lahn.²

Schmidt places the starting-point or nucleus of the Frankish confederacy on the lower Rhine among the Bruchteri and Tenchteri, on the ground that these tribes had always been among the most bitter enemies of Rome.³ Schütte, however, takes issue with this argument, agreeing instead with Procopius,⁴ who considers the Rhenish marshes the original home of the Franks.⁵ Yet another viewpoint is offered by Sergeant, who states that "...near the springs of the two Salas, in and around the Thüringerwald, was the very cradle-land of the people called Franks."⁶

Sergeant also mentions the legendary Trojan origin of the Franks. He states that the work known as "Fredegarius," which is in part based on Gregory of Tours, is especially responsible for this

1. Schütte: Our Forefathers the Gothonic Nations, vol. 2, p. 171.
2. Schmidt: Geschichte der germanischen Frühzeit, p. 274. See map at end of Chapter I of thesis.
3. Schmidt: Geschichte der germanischen Frühzeit, p. 275.
4. Byzantine historian born at Caesarea, Palestine about 490 A.D.
5. Schütte: Our Forefathers the Gothonic Nations, vol. 2, p. 173.
6. Sergeant: The Franks - The Story of the Nations, p. 45. See map at end of Chapter I of thesis.

legend. Gregory says of the Franks:

It is a common tradition that this people issued from Pannonia...¹

The legend itself, which is based upon a passage from Virgil,² concerns the migration to Pannonia of a Trojan named Antenor.³ Hence, the alleged relationship of the Franks to the Trojans.

The Frankish confederacy was at first a very loosely-knit organization, its members capable of concerted action only in warfare. Of the Franks, Schmidt remarks:

Der Frankenname, neben dem die Einzelnamen noch volle Geltung behalten, ist vorerst das einzige sichtbare Band, das sie umschlieszt. Nur langsam gewinnen diese vorübergehenden Bündnisse an Dauerhaftigkeit und Stärke, um schliesslich erst in dem frankischen Gesamtreiche sich zu einer politischen Einheit zu verdichten.⁴

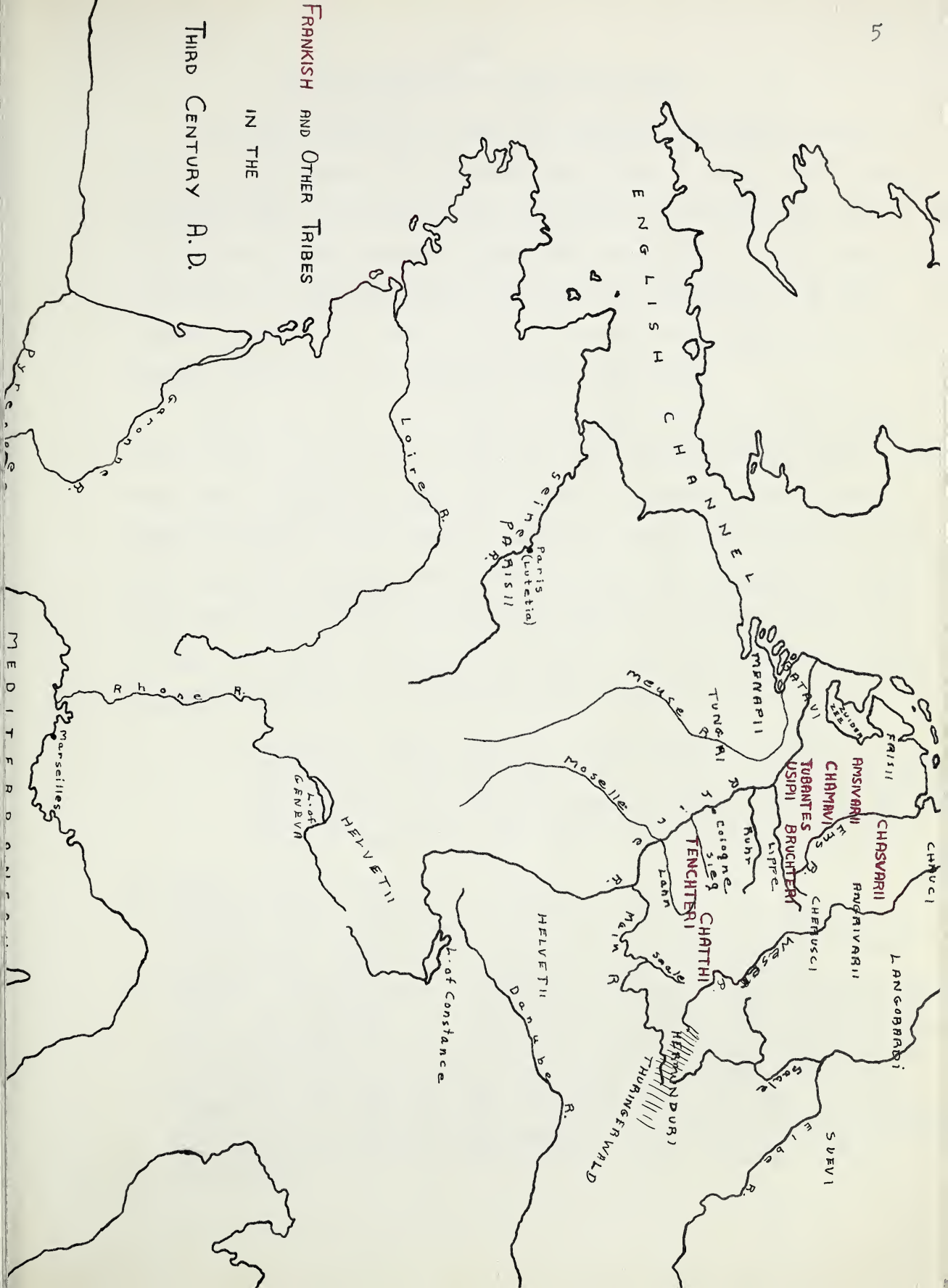
1. Gregory of Tours: History of the Franks, II, 8 (9).

2. Aeneid: i. 246.

3. Sergeant: The Franks, p. 17.

4. Schmidt: Geschichte der germanischen Frühzeit, p. 274.

FRANKISH AND OTHER TRIBES
IN THE
THIRD CENTURY A. D.



II

THE FRANKS TO THE DEATH OF CLOVIS

The Roman conquest of Gaul was completed by Julius Caesar in 50 B.C., eight years after his arrival there as proconsul.¹ Having conquered Gaul, the Romans were now obliged to defend her against the thrusts of the Germanic tribes who inhabited the right bank of the Rhine. To this end, Roman legions were stationed along the entire length of the Rhine, which had early been recognized as the barrier separating the Germanic tribes from Gaul.

During the first centuries of the Christian era, the Germanic tribes were in a constant state of flux. Funck-Brentano states that they were a nomadic people, and therefore required vast tracts of land in order to live.² Hence, as their population increased, they were forced to seek new territory. As one tribe expanded, it would very often overrun the territory occupied by another, which would, in turn, be forced to move on in order to escape destruction. This Germanic expansion is summed up by Funck-Brentano, who states:

...each of these numerous German³ thrusts into the territory of Gaul or other parts of the Roman Empire, was provoked by a similar thrust by another German people into the territory of those who were forced to emigrate. It was like a swarm of bees coming to occupy the hive of a feebler swarm, which was thus obliged, under pain of

1. Duruy, Victor: *Histoire de France*, vol. 1, p. 64.
2. Funck-Brentano, Frantz: *The Earliest Times*, p. 175. The statement that the Germanic tribes were nomadic is based on the histories of Caesar and Tacitus, who knew them in time of war. In peacetime, they were largely an agricultural people.
3. "German," as used here, signifies "Germanic." This erroneous use of the term "German" is almost universal among English-speaking authors and translators. Correct usage limits it to reference to the inhabitants or institutions of modern Germany. This problem of terminology is peculiar to the English language. In German, the terms "die Germanen" and "die Deutschen" are used to refer to the Germanic peoples and to the inhabitants of modern Germany respectively. In French, the Germanic peoples are referred to as "les Germains" and the inhabitants of modern Germany as "les Allemands."

extinction, to seek a new home elsewhere. The people who had been driven out thrust themselves upon their neighbors, who in their turn thrust themselves upon a third party, who thrust themselves upon Gaul.¹

In these Germanic tribes, the Romans found formidable adversaries. Although they lacked the skill and discipline of the Roman Legionaries, the Germanic peoples were by no means lacking in valor. According to Tacitus, as they were not plentifully supplied with iron², their defensive armour usually consisted only of a shield. Their most commonly-used weapon was the "framea," their iron-headed spear which Tacitus describes them as using both at close quarters and at a distance.

Ne ferrum quidem superest, sicut ex genere telorum colligitur. rari gladiis aut maioribus lanceis utuntur: hastas vel ipsorum vocabulo frameas gerunt angusto et brevi ferro, sed ita acri et ad usum habili, ut eodem telo, prout ratio poscit, vel cominus vel eminus pugnent, et eques quidem scuto frameaque contentus est, pedites et missilia spargunt, pluraque singuli, atque in immensum vibrant, nudi aut sagulo leves.³

It seems certain, however, that the leaders carried iron swords, since they are fairly common in Germanic graves.⁴ Tacitus describes the Germanic peoples as being tall of stature, with fierce blue eyes and reddish or auburn hair.⁵ Although his description is of the Germanic peoples of the first century A.D., it can be taken as a fairly accurate description of those who later became known as the Franks, since there was little, if any, intermarriage with other peoples.

The policy adopted by Julius Caesar in regard to the Germanic peoples was defensive, and wisely so, as pointed out by Sergeant.

...the Germans, in addition to being a multitude of swarming nations, were also in a condition of constant flux...His (Caesar's) course in Gaul was comparatively

1. Funck-Brentano: The Earliest Times, p. 175.
2. It must be remembered that Tacitus wrote in the first century A.D. Iron later became more plentiful.
3. Tacitus: Germania, 6.
4. See illustration at end of Chapter II of thesis.
5. The Latin "rutilus" may be rendered by "red," "gold-red," "golden," "yellow", "auburn."

smooth sailing, but if he had invaded Germany¹ he would have been caught in a vortex of overwhelming currents. In Gaul he had a fixed mark, whereas in Germany the target would have been incessantly in motion.²

Caesar's policy prevailed more or less during the first two centuries A.D. Members of various Germanic tribes did succeed in crossing the Rhine from time to time. The Romans would either force them back across the Rhine, or, at times, allowing them to remain, in fact, even inviting them across the river, would colonize them and enrol them in the Roman legions.³ As time went on, the armies of Rome contained more and more of this foreign element. To this fact is partially attributed the disintegration of the Roman Empire.⁴

The Frankish confederacy made its first appearance in history about 258 A.D. This same year, the Roman emperor, Gallienus, left the Rhine for the Danube frontier, leaving his son, Valerianus, at Cologne in the care of the tribune, Silvanus. A party of Franks, unnoticed by the Roman guards, succeeded in crossing to the left bank of the Rhine. However, these invaders were repelled by Postumus, the general charged with the defense of the Rhine boundary.⁵ In repulsing these Franks, Postumus captured much booty, which he proceeded to divide among his soldiers. Silvanus, however, laid claim to this booty for the prince. A conflict resulted, and Postumus was proclaimed emperor by his soldiers.⁶ The following year, 259, a large number of Franks made their way through Gaul and into Spain, where they captured and destroyed Tarragona. After

1. This term is misleading. It is very loosely used by most English-speaking writers to designate both modern Germany and the lands occupied by the ancient Germanic tribes. See footnote 3, p. 6.
2. Sergeant: The Franks, p. 24.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
5. Schmidt: Geschichte der deutschen Stämme, vol. 2, p. 437.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 437. According to Sergeant (*op. cit.*, p. 60), Postumus killed both the emperor's son and the latter's guardian. Postumus was one of the "Thirty Tyrants" who, in Gallienus' reign, assumed authority in various parts of the Roman Empire.

wandering about in Spain for twelve years, they seized a number of Spanish ships and made their way to Africa, where they disappeared.¹ After the invasions of 259, further attacks by the Franks were warded off by Postumus, who made use of Frankish auxiliaries, probably composed partly of prisoners of war and partly of mercenaries.²

The next major Germanic invasions of Gaul took place around 275.³ Germanic tribes crossed the Rhine at numerous points, and in the words of Funck-Brentano, "spread themselves right and left in devastating hordes."⁴ Schmidt states that the Alemanni constituted the greatest danger at this time. Accordingly, the emperor Probus personally led his troops against the Alemanni in 277, leaving to his generals the struggle against the Franks. By 278, these Germanic invaders had been driven from Gaul.⁵ Those of the Franks who had been taken prisoner were sent by Probus to Thrace as colonists.⁶ However, they did not remain there for long, but around 280, seizing a number of ships, made their way back to their homeland. Duruy describes their escape:

Mais, fatigués bientôt de cet exil, ils se saisirent de quelques barques, passèrent les détroits, franchirent la Méditerranée, en pillant tour à tour les côtes d'Asie, de Grèce et d'Afrique, jusqu'aux colonnes d'Hercule, puis tournant l'Espagne et la Gaule, vinrent conter à leurs compatriotes des bords du Rhin la faiblesse du grand empire qu'ils avaient impunément traversé de part en part.⁷

1. Guizot: History of France from the Earliest Times to 1848. vol.1, p. 104. That the Franks were able to invade Gaul in such large numbers is attributed by Sergeant (The Franks; p. 60) to the fact that Postumus, having killed the young prince and his guardian, was now too busy defending himself against Aureolus, a general sent by Gallienus, to properly attend to the defense of the Rhine frontier.
2. Schmidt: Geschichte der deutschen Stämme, vol. 2, p. 438.
3. Funck-Brentano: The Earliest Times, p. 180.
4. Ibid., p. 180.
5. Schmidt: op. cit., p. 440.
6. Schütte: Our Forefathers, vol. 2, p. 174.
7. Duruy: Histoire de France, vol.1, p. 84.

Around 286, Salian Franks, along with Saxons, were carrying out piratic raids in the English Channel and on the northern coast of France. Many of the pirate ships were captured by Carausius, who had been charged with combatting this disorder.¹ Carausius strengthened his troops by the addition of a Germanic element which included Franks. Then, going to Britain, he had himself proclaimed emperor.² The Saxons at this time were advancing westward. Their advance caused a migration of Salian Franks.

Die Salier müssen damals infolge des Vordringens der Sachsen, ihre Heimat, das Salland an der Yssel, aufgegeben und sich weiter südlich in der Veluwe am Ufer des Alten Rheines niedergelassen haben, welcher Strom ihnen einen leichten Zugang zum Meere eröffnete.³

In 288, from their new location on the Rhine, the Salians attempted to penetrate the land of the Batavi, but were driven back by Emperor Constantius I. At the same time, other Frankish branches crossed the Rhine at Cologne, and after pushing far into Gaul, returned home with considerable booty. However, these Franks were punished by the emperor Maximian, who personally led his troops against them and defeated them in their own territory.⁴ The territory of the Batavi was invaded by Franks (Chamavi) and Frisians about 295. Constantius repelled this invasion, taking numerous prisoners, whom he settled as colonists in the districts of Amiens, Beauvais, Troyes and Langres.⁵

Immediately after his accession in 306, the emperor Constantine the Great, the son of Constantius, was obliged to fight against the Franks, who had forced their way into Gaul. These Frankish invaders were Bruchteri and possibly Amsivarii and

1. Schmidt: *Geschichte der deutschen Stämme*, vol. 2, p. 440.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 441.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 441.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 442.

Tubantes.¹ The victorious Constantine took the Frankish princes Ascaricus and Merogaisus prisoner and had them thrown to the wild animals in the arena.² Constantine determined to end the ever-present threat of invasion by completely crushing the power of the would-be invaders. Therefore, in the summer of 310, he led an offensive across the Rhine into the land of the Bruchteri. The campaign, which was carried out with great cruelty, ended in a Roman victory.

Der Krieg ward mit der grössten Grausamkeit geführt; die Ansiedelungen der Germanen wurden verwüstet, zahlreiche Menschen hingeschlachtet, andere als Gefangene fortgeschleppt und in die Arena geschickt.³

Early in 313, the Franks living further down the Rhine (Schmidt⁴ thinks they probably were the Chamavi) entered Roman territory. Constantine gained a decisive victory over them.⁵ With the victory of Constantine's son, Crispus, over the Salians in 320,⁶ the struggle of Rome against the Franks was over for a period of some twenty years.

The peace which Constantine had established along the Rhine boundary lasted until 341, when the Franks again invaded Gaul. However, their invasion was quickly repelled by Constans, one of the emperors of the Western Empire.⁷ There was again peace along the Rhine until 350, when Gaul was invaded by Frankish and Alemannic forces.⁸ This invasion was facilitated by the fact that the Rhine boundary was at the time only poorly protected, Magnentius having departed with most of his troops to battle against

1. Schmidt: *Geschichte der deutschen Stämme*, vol. 2, p. 442.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 443.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 443.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 443.

5. Probably in the vicinity of Trier, since the victory was celebrated there. (Schmidt: *op. cit.* p. 443).

6. Schmidt: *op. cit.* p. 443.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 264.

8. Schütte: *Our Forefathers*, vol. 2, p. 174.

Emperor Constantius II in Pannonia.¹ By December 355 when Julian, a nephew of Constantine the Great, arrived in Gaul to take up his duties as Caesar, the Franks had captured Castra Herculis, Qualburg, Castra Vetera, Neuss, Bonn, Andernach and Cologne.² By the autumn of 356, Julian had retaken Cologne by means of negotiation with Frankish princes, who are not identified.³ Julian's sojourn in Gaul saw several military campaigns against the Franks. In December 357, he went to the lower Rhine, where a force of 600 Franks had penetrated far into Belgium. Their retreat cut off by the Romans, these Franks moved into two abandoned Roman citadels on the Meuse, at Maastricht, where the Roman forces besieged them for fifty-three days. Exhausted food supplies finally forced them to surrender. Julian sent these Frankish prisoners to the emperor Constantius, who enrolled them in his army.⁴ Julian spent the rest of the winter in Paris, or Lutetia, as it was then called.⁵ Early in the summer of 358, he was again obliged to put down disturbances which had broken out on the lower Rhine. Due to the pressure exerted by the westward-advancing Saxons, the Chamavi attempted to cross the Rhine. Forced back, they then sailed down the Rhine and conquered the Batavian Island, driving out Salians who were already settled there. The latter fled to Toxandria⁶ and sent envoys to Julian with the request that they be allowed to settle in the district. Julian permitted these Salian fugitives to settle in Toxandria as subjects

1. Schmidt: *Geschichte der deutschen Stämme*, vol. 2, p. 264. Magnentius had usurped the power of Constans in 350, after the assassination of the latter. According to Sergeant (*The Franks*, p. 70), Magnentius was a Frank in the service of Rome.
2. Schmidt: *op. cit.*, p. 445.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 445.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 445.
5. Sergeant: *op. cit.*, p. 73.
6. District in Belgian Limburg. This place name survives in that of the village of Tessenderloo (Schütte: *Our Forefathers*, vol. 2, p. 174).

of Rome, after having forced them to surrender to him.¹ He then proceeded to conquer the Chamavi who had driven the Salians from the Batavian Island. Under the terms of peace, the Chamavi were obliged to cease hostilities, supply troops to the Roman army, and to return to their homeland.² By 359, Julian had recaptured Castra Herculis, Qualburg, Castra Vetera, Neuss, Bonn, and Andernach.³ In the summer of 360, he undertook a campaign against the Chattvarii, who were raiding the land on the left bank of the Rhine. Crossing the Rhine at Castra Vetera, he moved his forces up the Lippe and then southward into the homeland of the Chattvarii, taking them completely by surprise and quickly conquering them. The Romans took many prisoners, whom they settled in the district around Langres.⁴

Until Julian's death in 363, peace reigned along the Rhine. When this peace was disturbed on the lower Rhine early in the reign of Emperor Valentinian I (364), the westward advance of the Saxons was again to blame. Due to the pressure of the latter, the Chamavi again invaded the Batavian Island. At this time, Frankish and Saxon pirates were also raiding the coasts of Britain. In 369, the Roman general, Theodosius,⁵ succeeded in putting an end to these raids and in forcing the Chamavi out of the Batavian Island.⁶ In 370, the Saxons penetrated into the land held by the Salians whom Julian had permitted to settle in Toxandria. However, these Saxon invaders were annihilated by troops under the command of the Roman general, Severus.⁷

A Frankish king, Mallobaudes, shared in the command of a Roman

1. Schmidt: Geschichte der deutschen Stämme, vol. 2, p. 446.

2. Ibid., p. 447.

3. Ibid., p. 447.

4. Ibid., p. 447.

5. Father of the later emperor of the same name.

6. Schmidt: op. cit., p. 448.

7. Ibid., p. 448.

army in a battle against an Alemannic force at Argentaria in 378.¹ In 380, Mallobaudes was attacked by the Alemannic prince, Macrianus, an ally of Rome. The Alemanni were defeated and Macrianus killed. Consequently, the Franks took possession of the Alemannic territory to the north of the Main.²

What Schütte³ refers to as a Roman civil war, was the signal for a fresh outbreak of Germanic raids and invasions in 388. Since 383, Magnus Maximus had ruled in Gaul as emperor. By means of his powerful and much-feared troops, he had held the people along the Rhine frontier firmly in check. However, in 388, he left for Italy, to lead his forces against the emperor, Valentinian II.⁴ Taking immediate advantage of Maximus' absence, Saxon pirates again raided the Gallic coasts, and Frankish forces, under the leadership of Gennobaudes, Markomer and Sunno, invaded Gaul, devastating in particular the district around Cologne.⁵ According to Schmidt, Gennobaudes was a Frankish king, and Markomer and Sunno, princes. As these invaders were returning home, some of them decided to remain on the left bank of the Rhine to pillage further. Those who remained were dispersed without difficulty by a Roman force, probably near Aachen.⁶ In the winter of 392-393, Arbogast, a Roman general of Frankish birth, crossed the Rhine at Cologne and invaded the land of the Bruchteri and the Chamavi. On his suggestion, the emperor Eugenius⁷ made treaties with the Franks on the Rhine frontier in 393. According to the terms of these treaties, the Franks were to supply troops to Eugenius' army.⁸ In 396, Stilicho,

1. Schmidt: *Geschichte der deutschen Stämme*, vol. 2, p. 449.

2. Schütte: *Our Forefathers*, vol. 2, p. 174.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 175.

4. Schmidt: *op. cit.*, p. 449.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 449.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 450.

7. Eugenius was raised to the position of emperor by Arbogast.

(Schmidt: *op. cit.*, p. 288).

8. Schmidt: *op. cit.*, p. 451.

a Roman general, who was a Vandal by birth, renewed the treaties made by Eugenius.¹ There were no further hostilities between the Franks and Romans until after the first decade of the fifth century.²

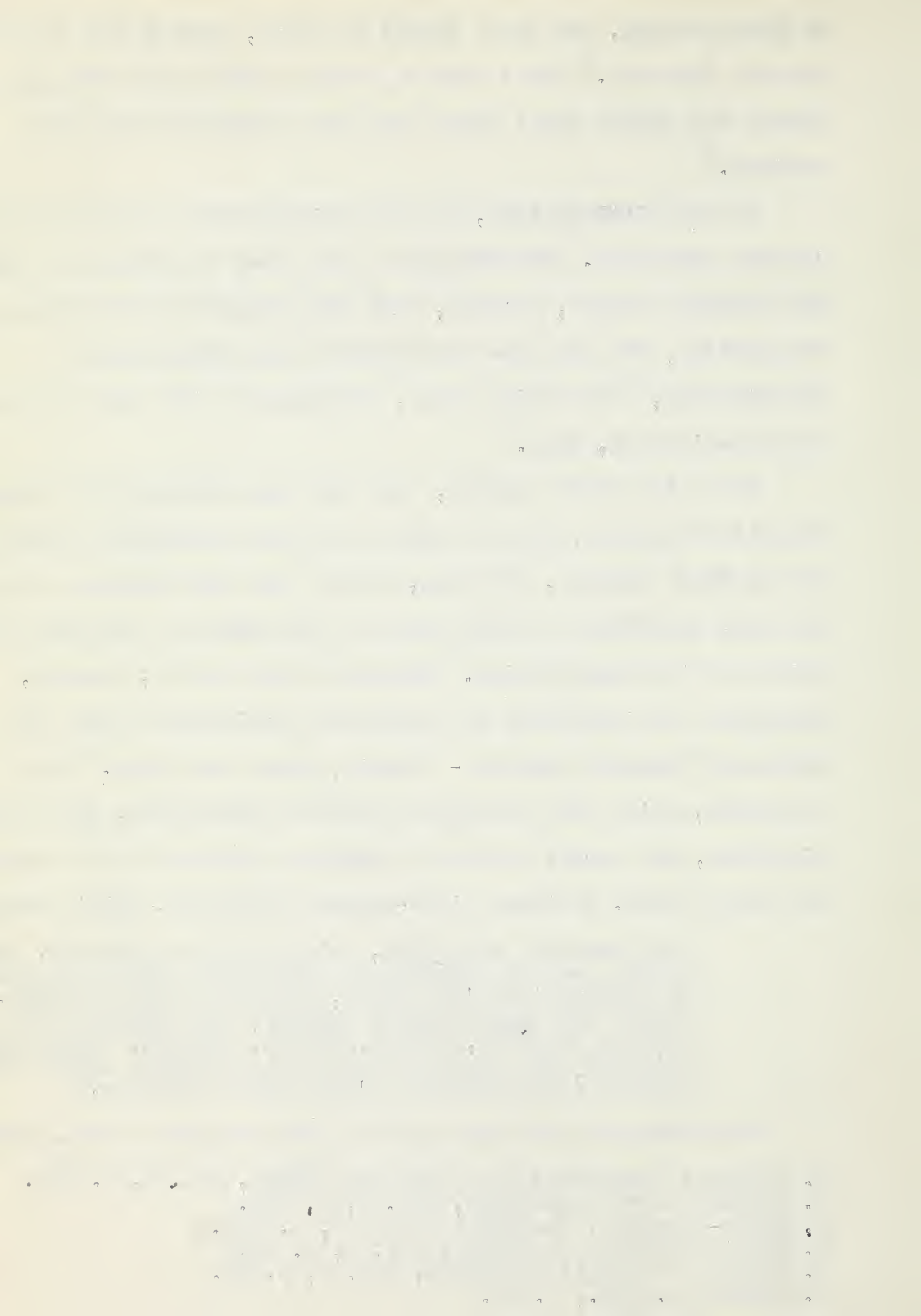
By the fifth century, the Christianisation of Gaul had been largely completed. Christianity in Gaul took the Orthodox form. The Germanic tribes, however, with the exception of the Goths and Burgundians, who had been converted to the Arian form of Christianity,³ were still pagan, belonging to the cult of the Scandinavian god, Odin.⁴

Up to the fifth century, Gaul had been subjected to frequent Germanic invasions, most of which had been successfully repelled by the Roman legions. At times, Franks and other Germanic elements had been permitted to settle west of the Rhine as subjects or allies of the Roman Empire. Towards the end of 406, however, commenced the inundation and permanent settlement of Gaul by vast hordes of Germanic peoples - Vandals, Alans and Suebi.⁵ This influx of people, which was accompanied by much devastation, was a mass migration, not merely a raid by Germanic warriors for the purpose of taking booty. Of these fifth-century invasions, Malet remarks:

Les invasions violentes, celle des Huns exceptée, ne furent pas des expéditions militaires ayant pour objet la destruction d'un ennemi, le butin et la conquête. Ce furent des migrations de peuples, des déménagements de nations entières, hommes, femmes, enfants, troupeaux, quittant sans esprit de retour la première patrie et partant à la recherche d'une patrie nouvelle.⁶

The Franks did not take part in the invasions of 406, but

1. Schmidt: Geschichte der deutschen Stämme, vol. 2, p. 451.
2. Schütte: Our Forefathers, vol. 2, p. 175.
3. Funck-Brentano: The Earliest Times, p. 201.
4. Malet: Histoire de France, vol. 1, p. 23.
5. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 68.
6. Malet: op. cit., p. 25.



rather, tried to prevent them, feeling themselves threatened by the devastating hordes hurling themselves upon Gaul. Although they did not succeed in keeping the invaders out of Gaul, the Franks did manage to inflict heavy losses on the Vandals.¹ Gregory places the number of Vandals killed at 20,000, and goes on to state that the entire Vandal force might have been annihilated, had the Alans not come to their aid in time.² The Rhine being **frozen**, the invaders were able to cross it on foot.³ Spreading destruction as they went, they passed through Gaul and crossed the Pyrenees into Spain.⁴

In 413, the Burgundians, under their king, Gondicaire, established themselves in the area from Lake Constance to the confluence of the Rhine and Moselle.⁵ A few of them remained on the right bank of the Rhine. The Alemanni spread out into the territory now known as Alsace, into the valley of the Doubs, into Switzerland, and further north, into the Moselle Valley.⁶ By 419, the Visigoths were established in Aquitaine and in the greater part of Spain.⁷

About 413, those Franks who were later to be known as Ripuarians, captured Trèves (Trier). They then expanded their territory until it reached the Meuse and the Sambre. They also spread southward.⁸ In the north, the Salian Franks occupied Belgium.⁹ Dispargum, in Belgian Limburg, was the residence of one of their kings, Chlodio. In 428, the Roman general, Aetius, repulsed the Ripuarian Franks from the left bank of the Rhine.¹⁰ Meanwhile, the

1. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 69.

2. Gregory of Tours: II 8 (9).

3. Sergeant: The Franks, p. 78.

4. Duruy: Histoire de France, vol. 1, p. 86.

5. Ibid., p. 86.

6. Lavissee: op. cit. p. 72.

7. Duruy: op. cit. p. 86.

8. Lavissee. op. cit. p. 72.

9. Ibid., p. 73.

10. Schmidt: Geschichte der deutschen Stämme, vol. 2, p. 454.

Salian Franks, under Chlodio, had pushed as far as the Somme. However, a ~~severe~~ defeat was inflicted on them, probably around 436, by Aetius, at Hesdin-le-Vieux, on the banks of the Canche. We are told that at the time of this defeat, the Franks were celebrating a marriage. They were so engrossed in their merrymaking that Aetius and his forces were able to take them completely by surprise.¹ The Roman general permitted the Franks to keep their newly-conquered territory on condition that they swear fealty to the Roman Empire and provide it with soldiers.²

The Huns, the most barbaric of all the barbarians, invaded Gaul in 451, under the leadership of their king, Attila, crossing the Rhine between Worms and Bingen.³ They are thought to have been Tartars, who had swarmed into Eastern Europe from Asia probably a century previously.⁴ The hordes under Attila's command consisted not only of Huns, but also of other peoples who had joined him as he traversed Europe - among them, Ostrogoths, Gepidae, and Alemanni. To these allies of the Huns ~~was~~ added a section of the Ripuarian Franks. Shortly before 451, the king of the Ripuarians had died, leaving two sons, both of whom were struggling for possession of the throne. The elder allied himself with Attila, in order to obtain the latter's assistance. The younger concluded a treaty of mutual assistance with Aetius.⁵ Thus, the Ripuarians fought both for and against the Hunnish invaders. The Salian Franks, part of the

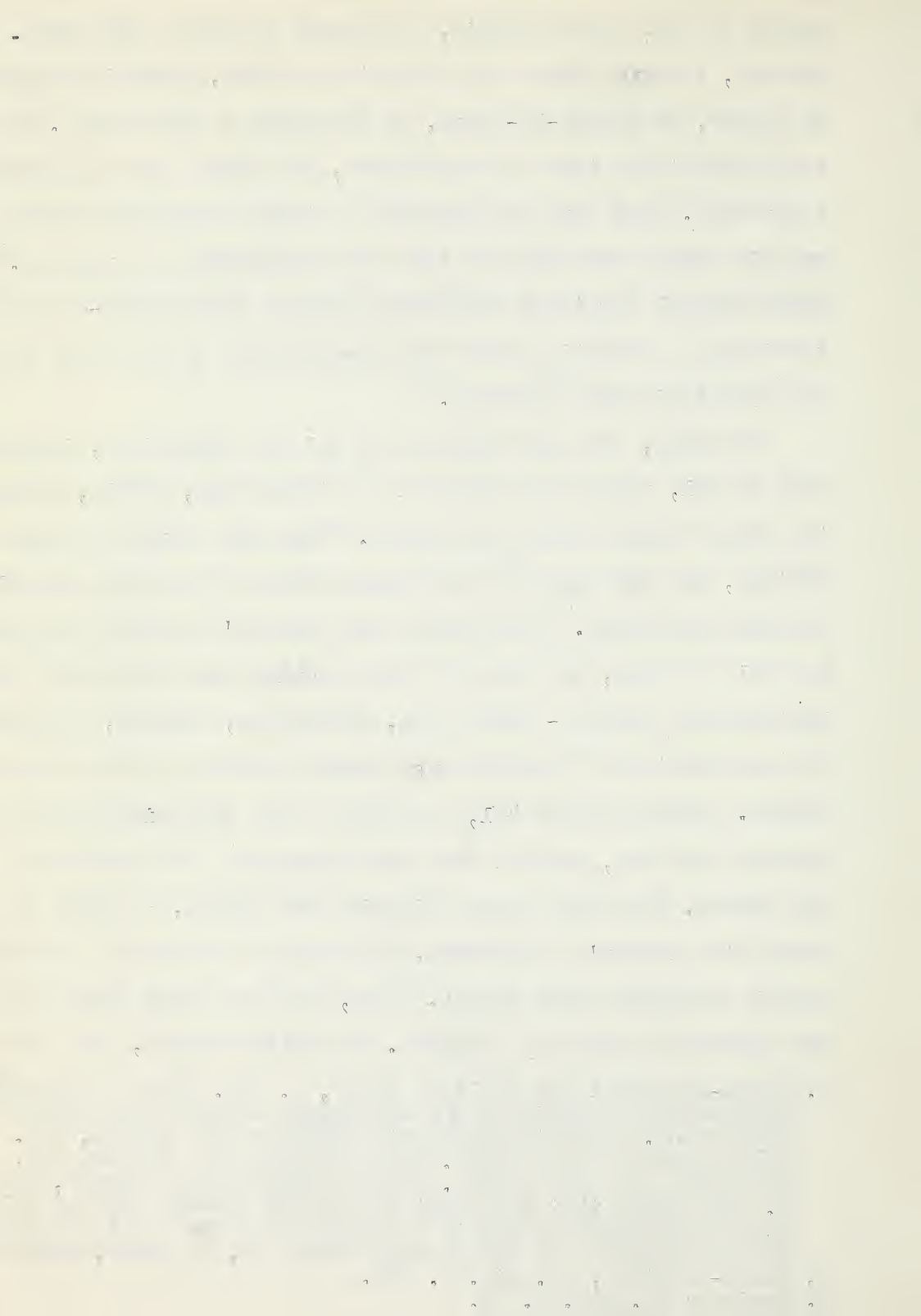
1. Funck-Brentano: *The Earliest Times*, p. 212. There is considerable difference of opinion among historians regarding the date of this event. Schmidt (*Geschichte der deutschen Stämme*, vol. 2, p. 454) places it around 428. Duruy (*Histoire de France*, vol. 1, p. 87) gives the date as 448. Lavissee (*Histoire de France*, vol. 2, p. 75) states that the event took place between 431 and 451. These differences serve to illustrate the fact that the history of the Franks up to the time of Clovis is, at times, very indefinite.

2. Funck-Brentano, *op. cit.* p. 212.

3. Lavissee: *op. cit.* p. 76.

4. Sergeant: *The Franks*, p. 91.

5. Schmidt: *Op. cit.*, p. 455.



Ripuarian Franks, the Visigoths and most of the Burgundians joined forces with Aetius against Attila. The latter was defeated in a battle which took place between Troyes and Châlons-sur-Marne.¹ Attila was never again able to attack Gaul.

The date of the death of the Salian king, Chlodio, is uncertain. Schmidt² places it around 460. This seems improbable, however, as Merovech,³ Chlodio's successor, is mentioned as having led the Salian Franks under the command of Aetius during the battle against the Huns in 451. According to Funck-Brentano, Merovech himself died in 457.⁴ It is from his name that the succeeding line of Frankish kings got their dynastic name of "Merovingian."

Merovech was succeeded as king of the Salian Franks of the Tournai district by his son, Childeric.⁵ The latter, however, was exiled by his people the first year after his accession, because of his dissolute way of life.⁶ The Franks at Tournai then set up as king, Aegidius, who had succeeded Aetius as Roman governor of Gaul. Aegidius died in 464, leaving a son, Syagrius. The latter did not succeed his father as governor of Gaul, but only as governor of the city of Soissons.⁷

According to legend, Childeric had, before going into exile, divided a gold coin with a trusted friend, who was to send him his half of the coin when the people again wanted him as king.⁸

Childeric took refuge in Thuringia, at the castle of King Basinus.

1. Funck-Brentano: *The Earliest Times*, p. 217.

2. Schmidt: *Geschichte der deutschen Stamme*, vol. 2, p. 465.

3. It is not definitely known whether or not Merovech was Chlodio's son.

4. Funck-Brentano: *op. cit.*, p. 222.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 222.

6. Gregory of Tours: II 11 (12).

7. Funck-Brentano: *op. cit.* p. 224. The word "city" as used here, refers not only to the town itself, but also to the territory of which it was the capital.

8. Gregory of Tours: II 11 (12).

After eight years had passed, so the legend continues, he received the half of the coin he had left with his friend, and thus knew that his people at Tournai wanted him to return. Shortly after Childeric's return to his kingdom, he was joined by Basina, wife of King Basinus. Childeric and Basina were married, and a son, Clovis, was born.¹ Childeric died in 481 and was buried at Tournai. His tomb was discovered in 1653. It contained a number of his personal possessions - weapons, jewels, gold coins, etc.²

Clovis (also called "Chlodowech") was sixteen years of age when he succeeded Childeric as king of the Franks of Tournai in 481. It should be noted, however, that the monarchy was not hereditary, but elective.³ The Franks, as most of the Germanic peoples, chose their kings from one particular family. In the case of the Salian Franks of Tournai, the family was that of Merovech.⁴ At the time of Clovis' accession to the throne, there were four Frankish kings in Gaul: Siegbert, who ruled over the Ripuarians; Ragnacar, king of Cambrai; Cararic, who ruled the area between Tournai and the Somme; and Clovis himself, who ruled at Tournai, on the upper Scheldt, over a territory partly corresponding to Hainault.⁵

The first territory conquered by Clovis was that of Soissons, the only part of Gaul still under Roman government. It was ruled by Syagrius, and extended from the Burgundian kingdom in a north-westerly direction to the English Channel, between the Seine and the Somme.⁶ Clovis, with Ragnacar, king of Cambrai, marched against Syagrius in 486, and defeating him near the city of Soissons,

1. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 95.

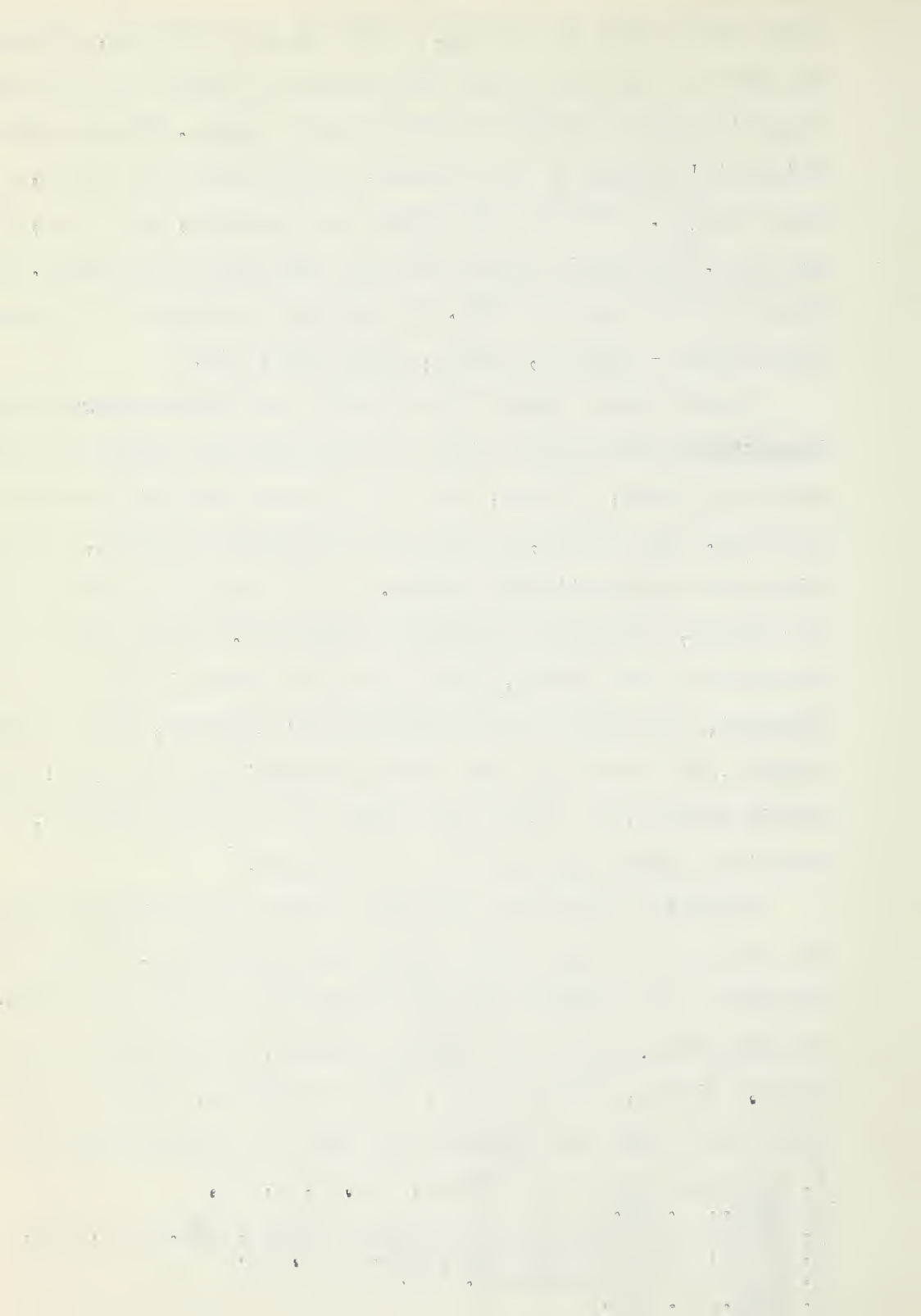
2. Ibid., p. 96.

3. Schmidt: Geschichte der deutschen Stämme, vol. 2, p. 473.

4. Duruy: Histoire de France, vol. 1, p. 97.

5. Sergeant: The Franks, p. 101.

6. Ibid., p. 101.



annexed the territory which he had ruled. The Franks took considerable booty, much of it from the churches. As the spoils were about to be divided among the warriors, the famous incident of the vase took place. The bishop of one of the churches had asked Clovis to restore to the church a certain very beautiful vase which had been removed from it. The king promised to do this, provided that the vase was part of his share of the booty. Clovis asked his warriors to allow him the vase over and above his rightful share. All agreed but one, who struck the vase with his battle-axe, saying that Clovis should have his share of the booty and no more. For the time being, Clovis swallowed the affront, but a year later, in reviewing his troops, he went up to the soldier who had insulted him, and snatching his weapons from him, threw them upon the ground, saying that they were not in fit condition for use. As the man bent over to pick them up, Clovis buried his own axe in his skull, reminding him of the vase at Soissons. Gregory remarks that by this act, Clovis put great fear into the hearts of his men.¹ Soon after this, Paris fell to Clovis.²

Around 493, Clovis married the princess Clotilda, niece of the Burgundian king, Gondebaud.³ Clotilda, although belonging to a family of Arians, was herself an Orthodox Christian. Her uncle, Gondebaud, had murdered her parents, and would have killed her and her sister also, if they had not been rescued by friends. Sergeant⁴ remarks that the fact that Clotilda was an Orthodox Christian is easily accounted for, if the friends who rescued her were themselves Orthodox. Clotilda was determined to convert the pagan Clovis to

1. Gregory of Tours: II 18 (27).

2. Sergeant: The Franks, p. 105.

3. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 98.

4. Sergeant: op. cit., p. 113.

Christianity. At first, he refused to be converted. As Gregory relates, Clotilda had her first son, Ingomer, baptized at Tournai. The child, however, died a few days later, and Clovis argued that the pagan gods of his ancestors were angered at his son's baptism. About 496, their second son, Chlodomer, was born. He too was baptized, and soon became ill. Clovis again began to storm against Christianity, and although his child recovered, he remained unconvinced of the power of God. Soon afterwards, he led his troops against the Alemanni. The battle having taken a critical turn, Clovis, according to Gregory, began to pray, saying that if God would but grant him the victory, he would become a Christian. Immediately, the Alemanni turned and fled. Thus, now firmly convinced of the power of the God of the Christians, Clovis permitted himself and 3000 of his troops to be baptized by Remigius, bishop of Reims.¹ However, it is highly probable that Clovis, in embracing Christianity, was motivated by political rather than religious considerations. The fact that he became an Orthodox Christian secured for the Franks the invaluable support of the Roman church. Consequently, the Catholic Franks and not the Arian Goths prevailed as the chief power in Western Europe. Clovis' victory over the Alemanni put an end to the invasions of Gaul from the east for several centuries.²

Clovis offered terms of alliance to the cities of Armorica in 497. These terms were accepted, and the cities recognized the rule of the Franks.³ In 507, Clovis led his forces against the Visigoths, whose territory extended from the Loire to Gibraltar. Gondebaud, king of Burgundy, was his ally in this campaign. In the battle which

1. Gregory of Tours: II 22 (31).

2. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 99.

3. Sergeant: The Franks, p. 132.

took place at Poitiers, Alaric II, the Visigothic king, was killed and his forces routed. Clovis himself narrowly escaped death. Theodoric, Clovis' eldest son, the child of a pagan wife, conquered Auvergne. Clovis captured Toulouse and conquered Aquitaine.¹ In recognition of his victory over the Visigoths, Clovis received the title of Consul from the Roman emperor, Anastasius. In 509, the Ostrogothic king, Theodoric, sent to south-eastern Gaul an army which succeeded in raising the siege of Arles, which was being attacked by Franks and Burgundians, and in retaking Narbonne, which Clovis' ally, the Burgundian king, Gondebaud, had seized.²

Clovis now turned his attention to the consolidation of all the Franks into a single kingdom. As this could not be accomplished while other Frankish kings lived, he decided to do away with them, and take over the territory which they ruled. His first victim was the Ripuarian king, Siegbert. Clovis suggested to the latter's son, Cloderic, that he would inherit his father's wealth and become king of the Ripuarians. Upon hearing this, Cloderic resolved to have his father assassinated. He soon accomplished this, and informing Clovis of Siegbert's death, offered him part of the late king's treasure. Clovis sent messengers to Cloderic, and while the latter was bending over one of the treasure chests, one of the messengers murdered him with an axe. Clovis' scheme to set Cloderic against his father had succeeded. Next, Clovis captured Cararic, ruler of the territory between Tournai and the Somme, and his son. Both of these were put to death. Now, the only remaining Frankish king besides Clovis, was Ragnacar, king of Cambrai. Clovis marched against the latter, and capturing him, killed him with his own hand.³ Thus,

1. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2. p. 103.

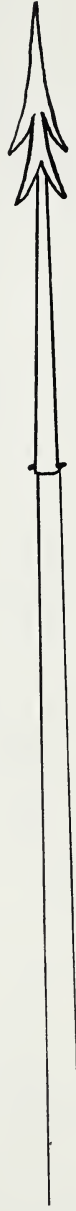
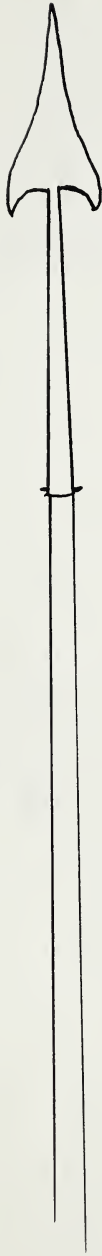
2. Ibid., p. 104.

3. Gregory of Tours: II 31 (42).

having disposed of all the other Frankish kings, Clovis was now sole ruler of the Franks. He died at Paris in 511, and was buried in the **Church** of the Holy Apostles.¹ His widow, Clotilda, survived him by many years.

1. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 106.

GERMANIC WEAPONS



S P E A R S



SWORD (DOUBLE-EDGED)

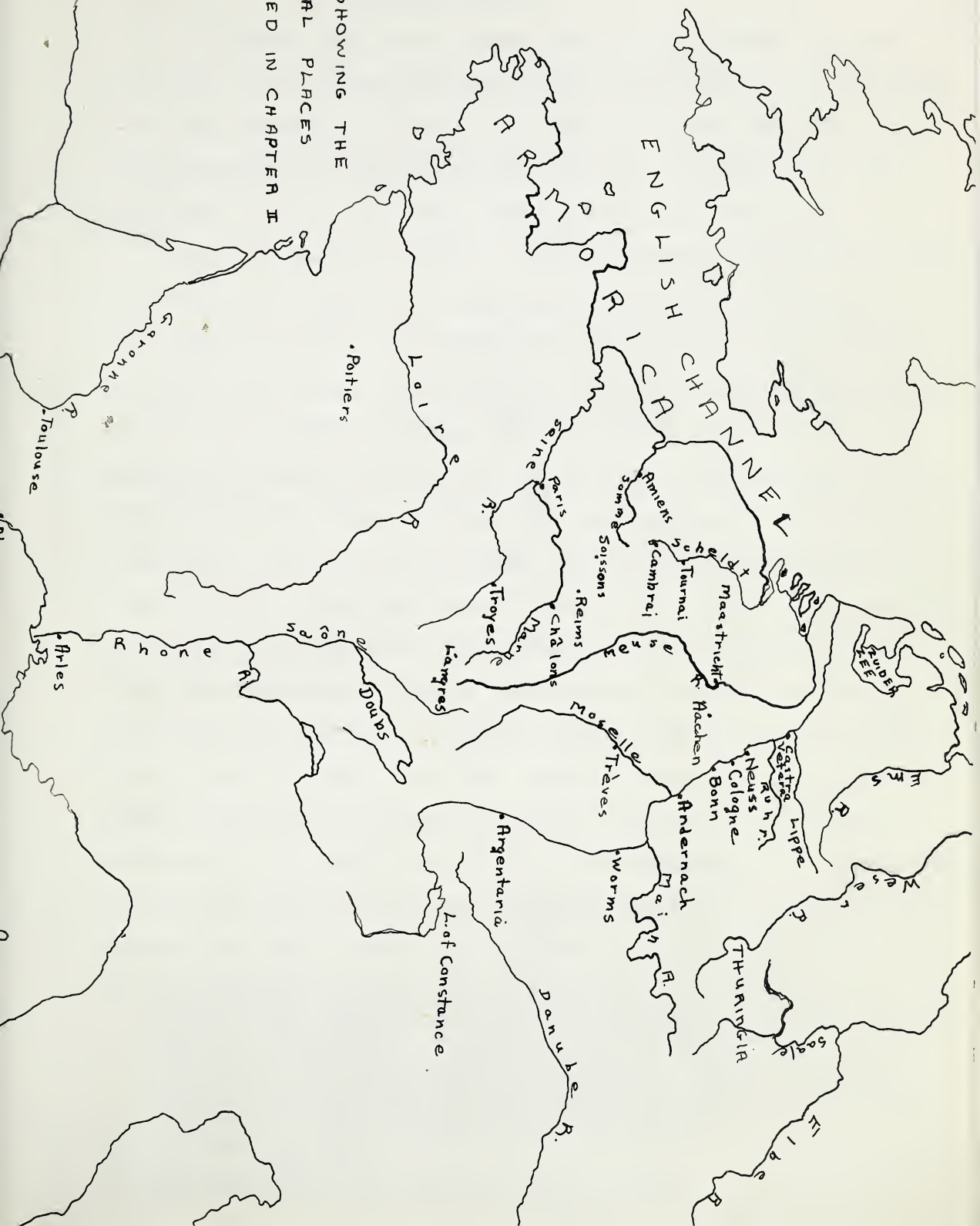


DAGGER



BATTLE-AXE

GAUL, SHOWING THE
PRINCIPAL PLACES
MENTIONED IN CHAPTER II



III

THE MEROVINGIANS

As we have seen in the preceeding chapter, Clovis had, by disposing of the other Frankish kings, consolidated all the Franks into one kingdom, of which he was the sole ruler. However, under his successors of the Merovingian dynasty, it was only at rare intervals that all the Franks were united under one king.

Upon the death of Clovis in 511, his kingdom was divided among his four sons - Theodoric, Chlodomer, Childebert and Clotair.¹ According to Lavissee, Theodoric, the eldest of the four brothers, received the eastern portion of his father's realm, which included the cities of Reims, Cologne, Zulpich, Trèves, Metz, Verdun and Châlons-sur-Marne. In addition, he was given Auvergne and some of the neighboring cities - among them, le Puy, Limoges and Cahors.² Chlodomer's share included Orléans and the neighboring cities of Auxerre, Sens, Chartres, Angers, Tours, and further south, Bourges and Poitiers in Aquitaine. Childebert ruled over Paris, over the territory extending as far as the Somme and the English Channel, and also over Brittany.³ Clotair's realm included Soissons, Laon, Noyon, Cambrai, Tournai and the territory extending as far as the Meuse.⁴ Theodoric's capital was Reims, Chlodomer's was Orléans, Childebert's was Paris, and Clotair's was Soissons. It is generally agreed that the four brothers purposely selected as their capitals cities that were located close together, as they realized the need

1. The Frankish monarchy was now hereditary, and not elective. "La royauté était héréditaire; les fils succédaient au père, chacun ayant un droit égal à l'héritage; ils se partageaient la monarchie suivant leurs convenances personnelles. Les filles, parce qu'elles n'auraient pu commander les armées, étaient exclues de la succession, comme de la possession de la terre." (Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 171.).

2. Lavissee: op. cit. p. 117.

3. Ibid. p. 118.

4. Funck-Brentano: The Earliest Times, p. 249.

for concerted action in matters of foreign policy. Of the four sons of Clovis, Lavissee says:

Sans doute les frères ont trop souvent agi au gré de leurs caprices et se sont parfois fait la guerre; mais ils gardaient le sentiment qu'ils devaient s'entr'aider et accomplir une tâche commune: achever la conquête de la Gaule, repousser les incursions, porter leurs armes chez les voisins. Aussi se sont-ils établis aussi près que possible les uns des autres.¹

About 515, a band of ~~Danish~~^{Scythian} warriors, under the leadership of their king, Hygelac (Chochilaichus), raided the Gallic coast near the mouth of the Rhine. The Danes loaded their ships with prisoners and booty and put out to sea. Hygelac, however, who had remained on shore, intending to follow later, was killed by Theodoric's son, Theodebert, who had arrived with a considerable force in order to combat the invasion. In the naval engagement which followed, Theodebert defeated the ~~Danes~~^{Scythians} and recovered the prisoners and booty they had taken.²

Around 520, Theodoric was obliged to put down a revolt which had broken out in Auvergne, under the leadership of the Roman, Arcadius, whom Gregory identifies as a man of senatorial family in the city of Clermont.³ Arcadius, upon hearing that Theodoric was on his way to Auvergne, fled to Bourges. However, according to Schmidt, it was only by means of a lengthy military campaign that Theodoric was able to crush the revolt of the Arvernians.⁴

1. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 118.

2. Ibid., p. 129. Schmidt (Geschichte der deutschen Stämme, vol. 2, p. 500) gives the date of this event as 528. This raid is referred to in the Beowulf epic.

3. Gregory of Tours: III, 9. O.M. Dalton, the translator and editor of Gregory's "History of the Franks," states that the senatorial family mentioned by Gregory was that of Sidonius Apollinaris, a Latin poet born at Lyon in 430. Arcadius was Apollinaris' grandson.

4. Schmidt: op. cit. p. 499.

In 523, Chlodomer, Childebert and Clotair invaded Burgundy.¹ Gregory² tells us that their mother, Clotilda, incited them to this attack on Burgundy in order to avenge the death of her parents who had been murdered by her uncle, Gondebaud, father of the reigning Burgundian kings, Sigismond and Godomar. The victorious Franks captured Sigismond, along with his wife and children. The Burgundian king and his family were then taken to the village of Saint-P  ravy-la-Colombe, near Orl  ans, where they were put to death by being thrown into a well. When the Franks left Burgundy, they considered it conquered. However, Godomar, Sigismond's brother, managed to organize further resistance, and the conquest of Burgundy had to be started afresh.³ Theodoric had not taken part in the first expedition to Burgundy. Having married Suavegota, daughter of Sigismond, in 515, he was on friendly terms with the latter.⁴ However, the eldest son of Clovis joined his three brothers in their next attack on Burgundy, for, as Lavissee⁵ points out, Sigismond being dead, there was now nothing to prevent Theodoric's claiming a share of his father-in-law's kingdom. This second Burgundian expedition resulted in the death of Chlodomer in June 524, in a battle which took place at V  zeronce.⁶ The Burgundian king, Godomar, retook all of the northern part of his realm, and according to Lavissee, recognized the rule of the Ostrogothic king, Theodoric,⁷ over the southern part, of which several cities - Avignon, Cavaillon, Carpentras, Orange and Vaison - had already been captured by the latter's

1. Lavissee: *Histoire de France*, vol. 2, p. 122.

2. Gregory of Tours: III, 6.

3. Lavissee: *op. cit.*, p. 123.

4. Schmidt: *Geschichte der deutschen St  mme*, vol. 2, p. 499.

5. Lavissee: *op. cit.*, p. 123.

6. V  zeronce is in the Department of Is  re.

7. The Ostrogothic Theodoric is not to be confused with Theodoric, the eldest son of Clovis. The Frankish Theodoric is referred to by many historians as "Thierry."

general, Tulun.¹

Chlodomer left three sons among whom, in the normal course of events, according to Frankish law,² his kingdom would have been equally divided. However, the two elder sons, aged ten and seven years,³ were murdered by their uncles, Childebert and Clotair, who, along with Theodoric, divided Chlodomer's kingdom. Childebert took Orléans and Chartres, Clotair took Tours and Poitiers, and Theodoric took Sens and Auxerre.⁴ Chlodomer's third son, Clodovald, was rescued. He entered the Church and was later canonised.⁵ Clotair married Guntheuka, the widow of Chlodomer.⁶

Around 529, Theodoric invaded Thuringia, but was forced to withdraw his troops. However, his second Thuringian expedition, which took place in 531, received the support of his brother, Clotair, and also of Saxon forces.⁷ Most of Thuringia fell to the Franks, who, as was their custom, took much booty. Among the prisoners was the princess, Radegonde, the niece of the Thuringian king, Hermanefried. Radegonde, who was very beautiful, was the cause of strained relations between Theodoric and Clotair, both of whom wanted to marry her. Finally, Clotair married the Thuringian princess. However, when he ordered the death of one of her brothers, Radegonde left him and went to Poitiers, where she founded the convent of Sainte-Croix.⁸ In the autumn of 531, Theodoric and

1. Lavissee: *Histoire de France*, vol. 2, p. 123.

2. See footnote 1, p. 26.

3. Michelet: *Histoire de France*, vol. 1, p. 225.

4. Lavissee: *op. cit.*, p. 119.

5. Clodovald was sheltered in a small village near Paris, which now bears the abbreviated form of his name - St. Cloud. (Funck-Brentano: *The Earliest Times*, p. 252).

6. Schmidt: *Geschichte der deutschen Stämme*, vol. 2, p. 500.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 500. Under the terms of alliance between the Franks and Saxons, the former received a tribute from the latter. (Lavissee: *op. cit.*, p. 129).

8. Lavissee: *op. cit.*, p. 129.

Clotair left Thuringia, which they had not subjugated completely, the Thuringian king, Hermanefried, still holding a remote part of his kingdom.¹

Theodoric was now obliged to once more turn his attention to Auvergne, which Childebert, having heard rumors of his elder brother's death, was preparing to seize. In fact, Childebert had already entered Clermont, the capital of Auvergne, with his troops. However, upon learning that Theodoric was still living, and was, moreover, on his way to Auvergne, Childebert immediately withdrew his troops, as Schmidt points out, "um einen kriegerischen Zusammenstos² mit dem gefürchteten Bruder zu vermeiden," and undertook a campaign against the Visigoths.² It is generally agreed that one of the objects of Childebert's attack on the Visigoths was to avenge his sister, Clotilda,³ who was married to the Visigothic king, Amalaric. The latter, who was an Arian, had treated Clotilda, an Orthodox Christian, with extreme cruelty. Childebert invaded Septimania in October 531, and defeated Amalaric at Narbonne. The latter fled by ship to Barcelona, where, according to Schmidt, he was killed by a Frank named Besso, who was in his service. Childebert, laden with booty, returned home, taking with him his sister, Clotilda. However, the latter died en route, and was buried in Paris.⁴ Septimania was still held by the Visigoths.⁵

The following year, 532, Childebert and Clotair again invaded Burgundy. Theodoric did not take part in this expedition, although invited by his brothers to do so. Lavis⁶ gives as reason for

1. Schmidt: Geschichte der deutschen Stämme, vol. 2, p. 501.

2. Ibid., p. 501.

3. Not to be confused with her mother, Clovis' widow, who is generally referred to as "St. Clotilda."

4. Schmidt: op. cit., p. 502.

5. Lavis⁶: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 124.

6. Ibid., p. 123.

Theodoric's absence the fact that he was busy putting down the revolt in Auvergne. According to Schmidt,¹ Theodoric was engaged in defeating Munderic, a pretender to his throne, who had gathered together a number of followers in Champagne. In Burgundy, Childebert and Clotair captured Autun and put the Burgundian king, Godomar, to flight.²

In 533, while Theodoric was completing the subjugation of Thuringia, his son, Theodebert, led troops against the Visigoths in Septimania, conquering Béziers, Dio and Cabrières. Theodebert even succeeded in crossing the Rhone and occupying Arles, in Provence, which territory was under Ostrogothic rule. However, upon hearing that his father, Theodoric, was seriously ill, Theodebert immediately started out for home, abandoning most of his conquests. Theodoric died in the summer of 534.³ Childebert and Clotair attempted to seize their brother's kingdom, which rightfully belonged to his son, Theodebert. The latter, however, by dint of presenting the aristocracy (die Groszen) of his realm with gifts, won their support, and thus foiled the attempt of his uncles to cheat him out of his inheritance.

Nicht ohne auf erhebliche Schwierigkeiten zu stossen, trat Theodebert die Nachfolge an. Seine Oheime suchten ihm den Thron streitig zu machen und nur dadurch, dass er die Groszen seines Reiches durch Geschenke für sich gewann, gelang es ihm, sich zu behaupten.⁴

In 534, Childebert, Clotair and Theodebert shared the Burgundian kingdom, which had at last been definitively conquered. Theodebert obtained the northern portion - the cities of Langres, Besançon, Avenches, Windisch, Sion, Autun, Chalon-sur-Saône, Vienne and Viviers; Childebert, the centre - Mâcon, Genève and Lyon; Clotair,

1. Schmidt: Geschichte der deutschen Stämme, vol. 2, p. 503.

2. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 123.

3. Schmidt: op. cit., p. 504.

4. Ibid., p. 505.

the south - Grenoble, Die and the neighboring cities.¹

Having conquered Burgundy, the Franks now desired to extend their dominion to the shores of the Mediterranean. As Lavissee² points out, they were aided in this desire by circumstances in Constantinople and in Italy. Justinian, the Roman emperor at Constantinople, dreamed of restoring the ancient Roman Empire. An event in Italy, which country was under Ostrogothic rule, gave him an excuse for sending an army there. The Ostrogothic king, Theodoric the Great, had died in 526 and was succeeded by his grandson, Athalaric. However, the latter being a child, his mother, Amalasuntha, daughter of Theodoric, governed in his stead, as regent.³ Amalasuntha, who "governed Italy with marked favor to her Roman subjects,"⁴ incurred the intense dislike of the Ostrogothic nobles. The death of her son, Athalaric, induced her to share her sovereignty over the Ostrogoths with her cousin, Theodahad, who, in April 535, had her imprisoned, and soon afterwards murdered. Upon the assassination of the pro-Roman Amalasuntha, Justinian declared war on Theodahad.⁵ The Roman emperor promised the Franks a large sum of money in return for their alliance. The Ostrogothic king, Theodahad, also sought an alliance with the Franks, promising to turn over to them Provence, as well as the sovereignty over the Alemanni settled in Rhaetia. Theodahad died in December 536, before he could conclude his negotiations with the Franks. The latter were offered these same terms by Theodahad's successor, Witigis, and accepted them. The Frankish kings divided Provence. Aix, Digne and Glandève went to Theodebert; Arles and Marseilles to Childebert; and Orange,

1. Lavissee: *Histoire de France*, vol. 2, p. 123.

2. Ibid., p. 124.

3. Bury: *A History of the Later Roman Empire*, vol. 1, p. 383.

4. Ibid., p. 384.

5. Ibid., p. 389.

Carpentras and Gap to Clotair.¹ However, when it became evident that Justinian's army, under the command of Belisarius, would triumph over the Ostrogoths in Italy, the Franks promised their alliance to the Roman emperor. This alternating alliance with Ostrogoth and Roman is typical of Frankish treachery and double-dealing.

Die Frankenkönige verfolgten nur ihre eigenen Interessen; durch abwechselnde Unterstützung beider Parteien gedachten sie diese allmählich zu schwächen und sich dann selbst ohne grosse Opfer in den Besitz Italiens zu setzen. Die Seele dieser doppelzüngigen Politik war Theodebert, der im weiteren Verlaufe seine Oheime ganz in den Hintergrund drängte.²

Theodebert invaded Italy in 539. The Ostrogoths, believing the Franks to be their allies, allowed them to cross the Po unhindered. The Franks then attacked the unsuspecting Goths. Those who escaped massacre fled towards Ravenna.³ From their camp near that city, the Romans saw the Ostrogothic fugitives and thought that they had been defeated by Belisarius. Advancing to meet the Franks, whom they too considered as their allies, the Romans met the same fate as the Ostrogoths.⁴ However, disease among his troops, along with lack of provisions, soon forced Theodebert to withdraw his forces from Italy.⁵

When the Ostrogoth, Witigis, was besieged in Ravenna by Belisarius, the Frankish kings promised to aid him in his struggle against the Romans in return for part of Italy. This proposition was rejected by the Ostrogothic king, who was taken to Constantinople

1. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 124.

2. Schmidt: Geschichte der deutschen Stämme, vol. 2, p. 507.

3. Ibid., p. 507.

4. Funck-Brentano: The Earliest Times, p. 256.

5. Schmidt: op. cit., p. 508.

as a prisoner in 540.¹ Theodebert took advantage of the struggle between the Ostrogoths and the Romans to establish his forces in the north Italian provinces of Liguria, Emilia and Venetia. Totila, who had succeeded Witigis, accepted the proposition rejected by the latter. Theodebert remained in control of Northern Italy until his death in 548.²

Meanwhile, in 541, Childebert and Clotair made their unsuccessful expedition into Visigothic Spain. Crossing the Pyrenees, they captured Pamplona and advanced to Saragossa, which they besieged in vain for forty-nine days. Then they devastated the province of Tarracona on both sides of the Ebro River. Laden with booty, they set out for home, only to find the passes through the Pyrenees blocked by a Visigothic army. According to Schmidt, the Franks would have been completely annihilated, had they not succeeded in bribing the Visigothic commander, who granted them a day and a night to carry out their retreat. As it turned out, only the Frankish rearguard was lost.³

When Theodebert died in 548, he was succeeded by his son, Theodebald, who was then fourteen years of age.⁴ Bühler⁵ describes the latter as "ein entarteter, unkriegerischer, kränklicher Knabe." The Roman emperor, Justinian, demanded that the Franks leave Italy and aid the Romans in their struggle against the Goths, as Theodebert had promised to do years before.⁶ Justinian's demand went unheeded, the Franks remaining in Northern Italy. In 552, a Roman army under the command of Narses arrived in Italy. The entrance of this force into Italy, along the coast of Venetia, was

1. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 125.

2. Ibid., p. 126.

3. Schmidt: Geschichte der deutschen Stämme, vol. 2, p. 510.

4. Funck-Brentano: The Earliest Times, p. 257.

5. Bühler: Das erste Reich der Deutschen, p. 57.

6. Schmidt: op. cit., p. 513.

successfully accomplished, despite opposition from Frankish and Gothic troops.¹ The Ostrogothic king, Totila, was killed, and his successor, Teias, begged Theodebald for assistance. The latter refused to give this aid, and Teias was killed in 553.² The same year, Theodebald allowed Leutharis and Bucelin, two Alemanni who were at his court, to lead an army into Italy. They both advanced into the southern part of the peninsula and were conquered in 554. The whole of Italy fell to the Romans, and the Franks were obliged to withdraw beyond the Alps.³ Theodebald died in 555.⁴

Since Theodebald had left no heir, Clotair seized his kingdom. According to Lavissee, Childébert was ill at the time, and therefore unable to claim a share of Theodebald's realm.⁵ In 555, Clotair was obliged to march against the Saxons and Thuringians, who were rising against the Franks. Lavissee tells us that the Saxons "se rebellèrent et entraînaient dans leur défection les Thuringiens."⁶ Clotair laid Thuringia waste and fought a large-scale battle against the Saxons. The next year, 556, he led a new expedition against the Saxons. At the approach of the Franks, the Saxons offered terms of peace which Clotair was inclined to accept. However, his warriors forced him to reject these terms and give battle. The Frankish forces suffered a severe defeat. Under the peace terms, the Saxons continued to pay the Franks an annual tribute of 500 cows.⁷

When Clotair annexed Theodebald's kingdom in 555, he entrusted

1. Bury: A History of the Later Roman Empire, vol. 1, p. 412.

2. Ibid., p. 413.

3. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 126.

4. Ibid., p. 120.

5. Ibid., p. 120.

6. Ibid., p. 129.

7. Ibid., p. 129.

one of his sons, Chramnus, with the governing of Auvergne. However, in 556, when his father was occupied with the Saxons, Chramnus tried to have himself proclaimed king, with the aid of certain Aquitanians who dreamed of setting up an autonomous state. Chramnus formed an alliance with Childebert and was recognized as king by the cities of Poitiers and Limoges.¹ Clotair, however, after forcing Chramnus to surrender, pardoned him. After the death of Childebert in 558, Chramnus revolted again. In 560, he took refuge in Brittany, with a Breton count named Conober. Clotair pursued Chramnus to Brittany and, seizing him, had him enclosed with his wife and children in a hut, to which he then set fire.² Since the death of Childebert in 558, Clotair had been the sole ruler of the Franks. This was the first time since the death of Clovis in 511 that all the Franks were united under one king. Clotair died in 561.³

The realm of Clotair I was divided among his four sons: Caribert, Gontran, Siegbert and Chilperic. Caribert received Western Gaul from the Bresle to the Pyrenees, with Paris, Rouen, Tours, Poitiers, Limoges, Bordeaux and Toulouse. The capital of his kingdom was Paris. Gontran's capital was Orléans, and his kingdom consisted of the province of Berry and the valleys of the Saône and Rhone. Siegbert, whose capital was Reims, had the territory watered by the Meuse and the Rhine, with dominion over the Germanic tribes as far as the Elbe; he also received Auvergne and part of Provence. Chilperic had Soissons for his capital, and the cities of the north-west: Amiens, Arras, Cambrai, Théroutanne, Tournai and Boulogne.⁴

Gregory⁵ tells us that before the realm of Clotair I was

1. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 120.

2. Ibid., p. 120.

3. Schmidt: Geschichte der deutschen Stämme, vol. 2, p. 518.

4. Lavissee: op. cit., p. 133.

5. Gregory of Tours: IV, 15 (22).

divided among his sons, Chilperic seized the treasure in the royal villa of Berny,¹ and then occupied the royal residence of Childebert in Paris. His brothers, however, forced him to give up his ill-gotten gains and take only his rightful share of his father's possessions. In 562, when Siegbert led his troops against the Avars,² who had hurled themselves upon Thuringia, Chilperic took advantage of his brother's absence to take possession of Reims. Siegbert, returning victorious from his battle with the Avars, drove Chilperic from his kingdom and, moreover, seized the latter's capital of Soissons, which he kept.³ In 566, Siegbert was again obliged to combat the Avars. This time, he was defeated and taken prisoner. By means of gifts, he won over his adversaries and even concluded a treaty of friendship with their chief.⁴ Caribert died in 567, and his territory was divided among his brothers. Chilperic was given the northern and southern portions of Caribert's realm: Brittany, with the cities of Rouen, Évreux and Angers, and in the south, Bordeaux, Cahors, Limoges and the districts of Béarn and Bigorre. Siegbert obtained the cities of Tours and Poitiers, and Gontran, those of Saintes, Angoulême and Périgueux. The brothers couldn't reach an agreement on the possession of Paris, so they decided that it should be governed by all three, and that none of them could enter it without the permission of the other two.⁵

It was in the same year, 567, that Brunhilda and Fredegonda, those two women who were destined to wield so much influence in Frankish affairs, first came upon the scene. The marriage of

1. In the canton of Vic-sur-Aisne, arrondissement of Soissons.
2. The Avars were, according to Sergeant (*The Franks*, p. 180), descendants of the Huns who had ravaged Europe under Attila.
3. Lavissee: *Histoire de France*, vol. 2, p. 133.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 153.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

Siegbert to Brunhilda, the daughter of the Spanish Visigothic king, Athanagild, brought the Frankish king much honor, for the Visigothic court at Toledo was considered among the Franks as being extremely brilliant.¹ Siegbert's marriage was all the more brilliant when compared to those of his brothers, who had married common servants. Chilperic had married Audovera, whom he later repudiated in favor of her servant, Fredegonda. Jealous of his brother's brilliant marriage, Chilperic asked Athanagild for the hand of his elder daughter, Galeswintha. The Visigothic king readily gave his consent, and Chilperic, marrying Galeswintha, sent Fredegonda away temporarily.² One morning, Galeswintha was found strangled in her bed. According to Gregory,³ her murder had been ordered by Chilperic. Gregory's translator, O.M. Dalton,⁴ is of the opinion that the crime was instigated by Fredegonda. A few days after the death of Galeswintha, Chilperic married Fredegonda.⁵

The period in which the sons and grandsons of Clotair I ruled Gaul was largely a period of civil war. It is well, therefore, to follow the course of these internal struggles before turning to the relations of the Franks with foreign powers. Lavissee points out that the origin of these civil wars was neither the hatred between Brunhilda and Fredegonda, nor the opposition of the predominantly-Roman population of Western Gaul (Neustria) and the Germanic population of the eastern portion (Austrasia), as is claimed by many historians, but rather, the ambition of the Frankish kings themselves.

Une passion unique occupe l'âme de ces princes: ils veulent augmenter leur part de royaume aux dépens du

1. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 133.

2. Ibid., p. 134.

3. Gregory of Tours: IV, 21, (28).

4. O.M. Dalton: footnote, p. 112, Introduction to Gregory's "History of the Franks."

5. Lavissee: op. cit., p. 134.

voisin. Il y avait, d'ailleurs, dans chaque royaume, des éléments de guerre civile. Dans chacun, les grands demandent au roi honneurs et richesses, et, s'il refuse, sont prêts à le trahir. Un roi qui veut faire la guerre à son voisin trouve immédiatement des complices parmi ces mécontents.¹

After the death of Galeswintha, civil war almost broke out between Chilperic and Siegbert, the latter wanting to avenge the murder of his sister-in-law. However, hostilities were avoided by the mediation of Gontran. It was decided that Chilperic would merely cede to his brother, Siegbert, those territories which he had settled upon Galeswintha at the time of their marriage, viz. Bordeaux, Cahors, Limoges and the districts of Béarn and Bigorre.² In 573, civil war did break out between Chilperic and Siegbert. The former sent his son, Theodebert, to seize Siegbert's possessions in Aquitaine. Siegbert called in troops from his territories east of the Rhine, and succeeded in defeating Theodebert. The latter was killed in Aquitaine.³ In defiance of the agreement by which none of the three brothers could enter Paris without the consent of the other two, Siegbert took his wife, Brunhilda, and their children to that city, where he left them while he pursued Chilperic to Tournai. The latter was deserted by the nobles of his realm, who proclaimed Siegbert as their king.⁴ However, immediately after Siegbert's proclamation as king (575), he was assassinated by two youths who stabbed him with poisoned daggers. Fredegonda was responsible for this murder. Chilperic's forces once more rallied around his standard.⁵

Siegbert was succeeded by his five-year-old son, Childebert,

1. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 136.

2. Ibid., p. 134.

3. Sergeant: The Franks, p. 182.

4. Lavissee: op. cit., p. 136.

5. Sergeant: op. cit., p. 182.

who, at the time of his father's death, was in Paris with his mother, Brunhilda, and his sisters. Childebert was rescued by a noble named Gondovald, who took him to Metz, and there had him acknowledged as king. Brunhilda and her daughters were taken prisoner by Chilperic.¹ Brunhilda's escape was contrived by Chilperic's son, Merovech,² who had secretly married her. The unfortunate Merovech, however, fell into the hands of Chilperic, who, at the instigation of Fredegonda, had him put to death. Brunhilda returned to Austrasia.³

Upon Childebert's accession to the throne, there came into being two distinct factions in Austrasia. The majority of the nobles sought to take advantage of Childebert's minority in order to increase their power and usurp the royal prerogatives.⁴ The opposing faction, which Lavissee refers to as the "royalist party," consisted of a few nobles faithful to the king. Lupus, duke of Champagne, and Gogo, Childebert's guardian,⁵ were included in the latter group. The nobles seeking to usurp the king's power allied themselves with Chilperic, while the royalist faction was allied with Gontran, king of Burgundy.⁶

In 577, an alliance took place between Childebert and Gontran. The latter, being childless, declared Childebert his heir.⁷ However, at the death of Childebert's guardian, Gogo, in 581, the young king was persuaded by the nobles to ally himself with Chilperic. The latter, whose sons were dead, adopted Childebert, promising to make

1. Lavissee: *Histoire de France*, vol. 2, p. 136.

2. Merovech was the second son of Chilperic and Audovera (Sergeant: Lavissee: *op. cit.*, p. 140. The Franks, p. 183).

4. *Ibid.*, p. 139.

5. O.M. Dalton (p. 384, Introduction to Gregory's "History of the Franks") explains that a boy succeeding to the throne as a minor was given a guardian.

6. Lavissee: *op. cit.*, p. 140.

7. Gregory of Tours: V, 11, (17).

him his heir.¹ Chilperic's policy at this time, as Dalton² points out, was to crush Gontran with the assistance of Austrasian forces, and then to annex Austrasia itself. Thus, Chilperic would be the sole ruler of the Franks. However, the alliance between Chilperic and the Austrasians was soon ended. Part of the Austrasian army, infuriated at Chilperic's invasion of Austrasian cities (which are not identified), refused to tolerate the Neustrian alliance any longer.³ According to Lavissee,⁴ Brunhilda instigated this move by which Childebert was "délivré du joug de l'aristocratie." In 583, the alliance which had previously existed between Childebert and Gontran was re-established.⁵

Chilperic was assassinated at Chelles, near Paris, in 584.⁶ Whether or not Fredegonda instigated the murder of her husband is a controversial question. Sergeant⁷ claims that the murder of Chilperic was the inevitable sequel to those of his and Audovera's sons, and that by committing these crimes, Fredegonda made a clear path to the throne for her own son, Clotair. Lavissee⁸ doesn't take a definite stand on the matter, but gives the impression that he considers Fredegonda innocent of this particular crime, pointing out that with the death of Chilperic, she lost her protector and support.

Upon the death of Chilperic, Fredegonda and her six-month-old son, Clotair II, took refuge in the Church of Notre Dame in Paris. Learning that Childebert had already made his way as far as Meaux,

1. Gregory of Tours: VI, 3.

2. O.M. Dalton: p. 121, Introduction to Gregory's "History of the Franks."

3. Ibid., p. 121.

4. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 141.

5. Ibid., p. 141.

6. Funck-Brentano: The Earliest Times, p. 266.

7. Sergeant: The Franks, p. 183.

8. Lavissee: op. cit., p. 141.

Fredegonda sent messengers to Gontran, asking the latter to journey to Paris to act as guardian to the infant Clotair.¹ Gontran agreed to her request, for, as Dalton² points out, he saw the prospect not only of increased prestige, but also of material advantage in taking over the governing of his nephew's kingdom. Relations between Childebert and his uncle became strained when the former demanded that Gontran surrender Fredegonda to him, and the Burgundian king refused to do this. Gontran had Clotair proclaimed king of Neustria.³

However, the revolt of the pretender, Gondovald,⁴ obliged Gontran to turn to Childebert again. Gondovald, the illegitimate son of Clotair I, had lived in virtual exile in Constantinople from 565 to 582, when the Austrasian nobles persuaded him to return to Gaul, considering him a potential weapon in their anti-monarchical intrigues.⁵ Upon the reconciliation of Childebert and Gontran in 583, Gondovald withdrew to an island in the Mediterranean. However, the death of Chilperic, along with the estrangement of Gontran and Childebert, decided Gondovald to return to Gaul. Therefore, he joined Gontran's former general, Mummolus, at Avignon, where the latter, who was out of favor with the Burgundian king, had taken refuge. There they were joined by the anti-monarchist nobles. Soon the southern part of Gaul was in a state of revolt. The pretender was proclaimed king at Brive-la-Gaillarde, in the department of Corrèze. Gondovald seized Angoulême, Périgueux, Toulouse and Bordeaux. Gontran, fearing that Childebert might ally himself with Gondovald, renewed his alliance of 583 with his nephew, for the

1. Lavissee. Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 142.

2. Dalton: p. 123, Introduction to Gregory's "History of the Franks."

3. Lavissee: op. cit., p. 142.

4. Not the Gondovald who rescued Childebert II from Paris in 575.

5. Dalton: op. cit., p. 124.

third time adopting him and declaring him his sole heir.¹ Gondovald's followers deserted him one by one. In 585, the pretender was forced to take refuge in Saint Bertrand-de-Comminges, which was soon besieged by the forces of Gontran and Childebert. Gondovald was handed over to the besieging forces by Mummolus, and was put to death.²

At this time (585), Childebert's guardian, Wandelin, died and was not replaced, since the young king had now attained his majority. Lavissee³ points out, however, that Childebert was only the nominal ruler of Austrasia, his mother, Brunhilda, exercising the real power of government. With the support of Gontran, Brunhilda commenced a ferocious struggle against the aristocracy, and succeeded in having many nobles assassinated. The Austrasian nobles Rauching, Ursion and Berthefried, concluding an alliance with the nobles of Clotair's realm, planned to murder Childebert and rule in the name of his two young sons, Theodebert and Theodoric. Their plot was discovered by Gontran, who revealed it to Childebert. The latter invited Rauching to Metz, where he treated him in a friendly manner. However, as Rauching was about to take his departure, the king had his servants murder him. Ursion and Berthefried, who were en route to Metz with an army, learned that their plot had been discovered, and took refuge in a fortress on the Woëvre Plateau in Lorraine.⁴

While Childebert's army was preparing to go in pursuit of Ursion and Berthefried, who were later captured and put to death, the Austrasian king signed a pact with Gontran on November 28th 587,

1. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 143.

2. Gregory of Tours: VII, 38.

3. Lavissee: op. cit., p. 144.

4. Ibid., p. 144.

in the city of Andelot in the department of Haute-Marne. The two kings swore eternal friendship, agreed on fixed boundaries for their realms, and also agreed that the one of them who died first, provided he didn't leave a son, would have as his heir the survivor. Childebert promised to turn over to Gontran those of the latter's leudes¹ who had taken refuge in Austrasia, and the Burgundian king promised to do likewise with Childebert's leudes.² When Gontran died on April 28th 593, Childebert, under the terms of the treaty signed at Andelot in 587, inherited the territory of the Burgundian king. In 596, Childebert himself died, leaving two sons, aged eleven and nine years.³

Childebert's realm was divided between his two sons, the elder, Theodebert, receiving Austrasia, and the younger, Theodoric, receiving Burgundy, as well as Alsace, Champagne and territory in the region which later became known as Lorraine. Brunhilda ruled in the name of the two young kings.⁴ Before the death of his mother, Fredegonda, in 597, Clotair managed to seize Paris and neighboring cities and win a battle at Laffaux⁵ against Theodebert and Theodoric.⁶ However, the two sons of Childebert defeated Clotair at Dormeille⁷ in 600. Consequently, the latter's realm shrank to the territory of the three cities of Rouen, Beauvais and Amiens.⁸ Because of the increasing antagonism of the Austrasian nobles, Brunhilda was obliged to take refuge in Burgundy. In 605, she urged Theodoric,

1. These "leudes" were really courtiers. Lavissee (*Histoire de France*, vol. 2, p. 145) defines them as "les fonctionnaires du roi, les grands personnages qui vivent d'ordinaire à la cour, ceux qui se sont unis au roi par la recommandation."

2. Lavissee: *op. cit.*, p. 145.

3. *Ibid.*: p. 146.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 146.

5. Between Soissons and Laon.

6. Lavissee; *op. cit.*, p. 147.

7. Department of Seine-et-Marne.

8. Dalton: p. 143, Introduction to Gregory's "History of the Franks!"

king of Burgundy, to make war on Austrasia, not on his elder brother, Theodebert, but, according to Lavissee,¹ on the aristocracy under whose control Theodebert ruled. However, war did not break out between Austrasia and Burgundy until 610. After having declared war on his brother, Theodoric captured the city of Toul. The Austrasian king arrived on the scene with his forces and a battle was fought outside the city. Defeated, Theodebert fled to Cologne. He suffered another defeat in 612, in a battle at Tolbiac, and shortly afterwards was captured and taken to Chalon-sur-Saône, where Theodoric had him executed.² Thus, the kingdoms of Austrasia and Burgundy were united under Theodoric. The latter died in 613, leaving four sons. Instead of having the kingdom divided among the four, Brunhilda broke with tradition and had only the eldest son, Siegbert, proclaimed king. She intended to rule in his name, but fate, in the form of the Austrasian nobles, intervened. The latter, headed by Arnulf, bishop of Metz, and Pepin de Landen, who were the ancestors of the Carolingians, called on Clotair to take over Austrasia and Burgundy. The Neustrian king reached Andernach without meeting any resistance. Brunhilda, however, did succeed in raising an army against him, and forced him to fall back to the Aisne. Suddenly, the Burgundian nobles abandoned the queen, who, closely pursued by Clotair, sought refuge in Burgundy. Brunhilda was captured and taken before the Neustrian king, who had her put to death, as well as two of her great-grandsons (613).³

Although in the period from 561 to 613 civil wars largely replaced wars of conquest, it is, nevertheless, necessary to consider the relationship of the Franks with other peoples. During

1. Lavissee: *Histoire de France*, vol. 2, p. 147.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 147.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 148.

this period, the Franks derived little glory from their military campaigns.

Brittany formed part of the territory which Chilperic received upon the death of his brother, Caribert, in 567. It had not, however, been brought completely into subjection by the Franks. In 578, Chilperic led troops against the Bretons, who, under their chieftain, Waroch, had seized the city of Vannes and refused to give it up. Although Waroch inflicted a severe defeat on Chilperic, he came to terms with the latter, agreeing to pay him tribute. The following year, 579, Waroch began his raids over again, extending them as far as Rennes and Nantes. Neither Gontran nor Childebert, under whose domination Brittany successively came, was able to deal with these disorders any more successfully than did Chilperic. However, at the end of the sixth century, Vannes was once more in the hands of the Franks.¹

The Frankish expeditions against the Basques, who inhabited the south-western corner of Gaul, had little more success than those against the Bretons. The Basques, too, were given to carrying out raids, some of which extended as far as Bordeaux. In 581, Chilperic sent an army under the command of Duke Bladast against the Basques. The greater part of the Frankish force was annihilated. In 587, an army sent by Gontran and commanded by Duke Austrovald also met defeat at the hands of the Basques. As a result of the campaign of Theodebert and Theodoric in 602, the Basques became tributaries of the Franks.²

After their settlement in Northern Italy in 568, the Lombards frequently invaded Dauphiné and Provence. Their invasions, however,

1. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 150.

2. Ibid., p. 150.

were repelled by Gontran's forces without much difficulty.¹ In 584, Childebert led a Frankish force into Italy at the appeal of Maurice, Roman emperor at Constantinople, who paid him a considerable sum of money to drive the Lombards from the Italian Peninsula. The Franks devastated the Po Valley. However, upon receipt of a sum of money from the Lombards, they withdrew from Italy.² Childebert returned to Italy in 585, 588 and again in 590.³ These invasions were, in the words of Hodgkin, "ravaging and plundering expeditions, effectual doubtless for the devastation of the country, but powerless for its conquest."⁴

In 585, Gontran sent two armies against the Visigoths in Septimania. One force succeeded in capturing Carcassonne, but the other was defeated at Nîmes. The Visigothic prince, Reccared, forced the withdrawal of both these armies. Gontran's forces invaded Septimania again in 589, once more seizing Carcassonne. Septimania, however, remained in the hands of the Visigoths.⁵

Lavissee seems justified in tracing Merovingian decadence to the half-century from 561 to 613. Of conditions in this period he remarks:

Les guerres civiles brisent l'unité du royaume et le partagent définitivement en quatre parties ennemies: Austrasie, Neustrie, Bourgogne et Aquitaine. Elles sont, avec la dissolution des mœurs et les crimes, la cause véritable de la décadence des Mérovingiens.⁶

Upon the death of Brunhilda in 613, Clotair II became sole king of the Franks. The power of the Frankish aristocracy was, however, continually increasing. Although Clotair was at this time the sole

1. Hodgkin: Italy and her Invaders, vol. 7, p. 15.

2. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 151.

3. Ibid., p. 152.

4. Hodgkin: op. cit., p. 15.

5. Lavissee: op. cit., p. 152.

6. Ibid., p. 153.

Frankish monarch, he was far from being the ruler of a united kingdom. Actually, he ruled over three separate kingdoms - Austrasia, Neustria and Burgundy. In each of these territories , Clotair was obliged to appoint a mayor of the palace. This official was the chief of the king's household, and thus, next to the king himself, the most important person in the kingdom. Landry was appointed to this office in Neustria, Radon in Austrasia, and Warnacaire in Burgundy, The king was obliged to make the latter's position permanent.¹

Clotair's position as sole Frankish king lasted approximately a decade. Austrasia demanded a separate ruler, the nobles of that district realizing that they would have greater opportunity to obtain wealth and high rank if they had a king in their own territory. In 623, Clotair sent his son, Dagobert, to rule over the area between the Ardennes² and the Faucilles.³ However, both Dagobert and the Austrasians being dissatisfied with this arrangement, Clotair was obliged, in 626, to extend his son's sovereignty over the whole of Austrasia, with the exception of Aquitaine and Provence, both of which had formerly been annexed to that kingdom.⁴ In Austrasia, Pepin de Landen, the mayor of the palace, and Arnulf, bishop of Metz, who was advisor to the king, governed in the name of Dagobert. As has been mentioned previously, Pepin and Arnulf were the ancestors of the Carolingians. Arnulf's son, Ansegisel, married Pepin's daughter, Begga. The Carolingians were their descendants. In 627 when Arnulf entered the monastery founded by his friend, Romaric, he was replaced as advisor to the

1. Funck-Brentano: The Earliest Times, p. 269.

2. A wooded plateau situated in the department of the same name and extending into Belgium.

3. Hills which connect the Vosges Mts. and the Langres Plateau.

4. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 156.

king by Cunibert, bishop of Cologne.¹

Early in Clotair's reign as sole Frankish monarch, revolt broke out in Burgundy. The king summoned a group of the rebellious nobles to his villa in Alsace, where he had them put to death. He had others killed at his villa near Sens.² The king realized, however, that he would be obliged to make some concessions to the Burgundians in order to preserve his authority in their territory. In 627, Warnacaire, the Burgundian mayor of the palace, died, and the nobles declared that they no longer wanted such an official, since they preferred to deal directly with the king. The latter agreed to this state of affairs. The nobles did not want a mayor of the palace because his presence in their territory would serve as a check on their independence. Already the nobles had their own armed bands. When Clotair II died in October 629, each of the three states - Austrasia, Neustria and Burgundy, was beginning to be divided into seigniorial domains.³

Clotair II left two sons, between whom, according to Frankish custom, his realm should have been divided. However, the elder son, Dagobert, did not share the succession with his younger brother. In 629 and 630, Dagobert made a tour of Austrasia and Burgundy, stopping at the principal towns to hear the complaints of the people and to render justice to rich and poor alike.⁴ In this way, he hoped to re-establish the unity of his realm. Following this tour, he took up residence in Paris.⁵

Aquitaine had never cheerfully endured the domination of the Franks. The desire of this district to have a separate government

1. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 157.

2. Ibid., p. 157.

3. Lavissee: op. cit., p. 158.

4. Guizot: The History of France, vol. 1, p. 141.

5. Lavissee: op. cit., p. 158.

was so strong that Dagobert decided to place it under the administration of his younger brother, Caribert, who established his residence at Toulouse. By the time of his death about 633, Caribert had defeated the Basques, thus extending his dominion as far as the Pyrenees. He left one son, Chilperic, whose death took place soon after his own. It is suspected that Dagobert was responsible for his nephew's death. Once more Dagobert was the sole ruler of the Franks.¹

Dagobert, as well as being fond of luxury, was all-powerful in the realm of the Franks. Therefore, the bishops and nobles were powerless to prevent his taking back from the churches and from members of the aristocracy wealth which had been given to them from the treasury. The king also confiscated bequests to the Church by private individuals. The wealth thus seized enriched the treasury and added to the luxury of the court.²

It was in 632 that the famous battle between Dagobert's army and the forces of Samo took place. According to Lavissee, Samo was a Frankish merchant who, at the end of the sixth century, went to trade with the Slavs. In return for his assistance in their struggle against the Avars, these Slavs made him their king. Samo founded a kingdom which had its centre in Bohemia and extended from the Havel River³ to the Styrian Alps. He offered his alliance to Dagobert, who, through his ambassador, sent him an insulting reply. As a result, the ambassador was imprisoned by Samo. Dagobert sent an army against the latter, and a battle took place on the banks of the Egra.⁴ Dagobert's forces were defeated. In the end, Samo was obliged to make peace. However, he kept his kingdom until his death in 658.⁵

1. Funck-Brentano: *The Earliest Times*, p. 271.

2. Lavissee: *Histoire de France*, vol. 2, p. 159.

3. A river in Germany (Mecklenburg and Prussia).

4. A river in Bohemia.

5. Lavissee: op. cit., p. 161.

In 637, Dagobert sent an expedition against the Basques, who had revolted, and succeeded in bringing them into subjection. He also managed to exact from the Breton chieftains a promise of obedience to Frankish rule.¹ According to Lavissee, Dagobert replaced one Spanish Visigothic king with another, neither of whom is identified.²

The Austrasians, irritated at Dagobert's moving the capital to Paris, demanded a king of their own. Therefore, in 634, Dagobert proclaimed his son, Siegbert, king of Austrasia. This territory was governed in the name of the young king by Cunibert, bishop of Cologne, and by Ansegisel, son of Arnulf, who had become mayor of the palace in Austrasia. The Neustrians, who feared that they might one day come under the domination of the Austrasians, laid claim to Dagobert's younger son, Clovis, as king. Dagobert, therefore, arranged that at his death, Siegbert would continue to rule over Austrasia, as well as Aquitaine and Provence, and Clovis would rule over Neustria and Burgundy. The nobles of the entire realm swore to observe this arrangement. Dagobert died on January 19th 639, and was buried in the abbey of Saint-Denis.³

The death of Dagobert marked the end of the period of Merovingian strength, and ushered in that of decline which, in little more than a century, terminated in a change of dynasty. After Dagobert, reigned the "rois fainéants" - "sluggard kings", or "do-nothing kings." These kings were mere puppets, the mayor of the palace wielding the real power in the kingdom. This state of affairs is well summed up by both Funck-Brentano and Bühler. The former writes:

1. Funck-Brentano: *The Earliest Times*, p. 273.
2. Lavissee: *Histoire de France*, vol. 2, p. 160.
3. Ibid., p. 162.

Up to and during the reign of Dagobert the kings deposed mayors who had ceased to please them, replacing them by others whom they preferred. But after Dagobert it was the mayors who deposed the kings.¹

That the kings were merely figureheads is expressed by Bühler:

Die Merowinger waren jetzt nur noch dem Namen nach Könige, die eigentliche Reichsleitung lag in der Hand der Groszen, insbesondere der Hausmeier.²

After the death of Dagobert I in 639, Ega continued in his capacity as mayor of the palace in Neustria, of which Dagobert's son, Clovis II, was now king. Pepin de Landen returned from exile and replaced his son-in-law, Ansegisel, as mayor of the palace in Austrasia, Siegbert's realm. In Burgundy, this position was taken over by Flaochat. The Burgundians had no king of their own, but along with the Neustrians, were under the rule of Clovis.³ Erkinwald succeeded Ega in Neustria. Pepin de Landen died in 640 and was succeeded by a noble named Otho. After the assassination of the latter, Grimoald, son of Pepin, became mayor of the palace in Austrasia.⁴

Lavissee⁵ points out that the duties of the mayor of the palace were contradictory. This official was the chief noble in the realm and therefore was obliged to maintain the privileges of the nobles. However, as representative of the king, he was also obliged to preserve the royal prerogatives. Some mayors, such as Erkinwald, favored the nobles, while others, such as Otho, were loyal to the king. The nobles didn't hesitate to show their resentment to a mayor who supported the king, as can be seen in the case of Otho. In 641, when the Thuringians revolted against the Franks and proclaimed their independence, the Austrasian nobles, out of hatred for Otho,

1. Funck-Brentano: *The Earliest Times*, p. 278.

2. Bühler: *Das erste Reich der Deutschen*, p. 62.

3. By the disposition which Dagobert had made of his realm.

4. Lavissee: *Histoire de France*, vol. 2, p. 164.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 164.

refused to march against that rebellious people. Thus, Frankish dominion over Thuringia was ended. Otho was assassinated by the Alemannic duke, Leutharis, with whom the Austrasian nobles seem to have plotted the crime. The Franks lost their sovereignty over the Alemanni as well as over the Thuringians.¹

Neither the king nor the nobles received the support of Otho's successor, Grimoald. Upon the death of Siegbert in 656, Grimoald sent the latter's son, Dagobert, to a monastery in Ireland, and placed his own son, Childebert, on the throne. However, the time was not yet ripe for a change of dynasty. Grimoald was overthrown by the Austrasian nobles and turned over to the Neustrian king, Clovis II, who had him put to death.²

Clovis himself died in 657 and was succeeded by his son, Clotair III. Bathilda, Clotair's mother, acted as regent for her young son. At this time, Ebroin was the Neustrian mayor of the palace. Austrasia and Burgundy had neither king nor mayor. However, in answer to Austrasia's demands, Ebroin gave that territory Childeric II, brother of Clotair III, as king, and Wulfoald as mayor of the palace. Ebroin desired to maintain the unity of Neustria and Burgundy, but encountered much resistance from the Burgundian nobles under the leadership of St. Leger, bishop of Autun. As is pointed out by Lavissee, Ebroin had a formidable adversary in this Burgundian bishop.³

When Clotair III died in 673, he was succeeded by his brother, Theodoric III. The latter had been placed on the throne by Ebroin, who had not consulted the Burgundians. Consequently, the latter revolted. This revolt was organized by St. Leger. Ebroin was

1.Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 164.

2.Hodgkin: Italy and her Invaders, vol. 7, p. 39.

3.Lavissee: op. cit., p. 165.

defeated and obliged to take refuge in the monastery of Luxeuil. Theodoric III was sent to the monastery of Saint-Denis. The bishop of Autun thus became the most important person in the realm. However, the Austrasian king, Childeric II, and Wulfoald, his mayor of the palace, rose against St. Leger who, in his turn, was forced to take refuge at Luxeuil. Upon the assassination of Childeric, both Ebroin and the bishop of Autun left their monastic retreat at Luxeuil.¹ However, the struggle between them was soon resumed. Ebroin proclaimed as king an alleged son of Clotair III,² and marching against St. Leger's forces, which were under the command of the Burgundian mayor of the palace, defeated them. Ebroin then abandoned his king of uncertain origin and proclaimed Theodoric III king of Neustria and Burgundy. He himself took over the office of mayor of the palace in both these territories. Ebroin's army besieged St. Leger in Autun and forced him to surrender. The bishop was put to death in 678.³

The Austrasian king, Childeric II, was assassinated in 673. The following year, Dagobert II, who had been sent to Ireland by Grimoald in 656, was brought back to Gaul and placed on the Austrasian throne.⁴ At Dagobert's death in 678, it seemed inevitable that Neustrian rule would be extended over Austrasia. To prevent this, the Austrasian nobles sent an army against Neustria. This force was under the command of Pepin d'Heristal and a certain Martin, who was related to Pepin. However, the Austrasian army suffered a severe defeat near Laon. Pepin managed to escape, but Martin was forced to take refuge in Laon, where he was besieged by Ebroin's forces. Upon surrendering, he was put to death. Austrasia

1. Lavissee: *Histoire de France*, vol. 2, p. 166.

2. Duruy: *Histoire de France*, vol. 1. p. 160.

3. Lavissee: *op. cit.*, p. 166.

4. Hodgkin: *Italy and her Invaders*, vol. 7, p. 42.

came under Neustrian rule. It was just three years later, in 681, that Ebroin was assassinated.¹

Waratto, who replaced Ebroin as Neustrian mayor of the palace, concluded a peace treaty with Pepin, the Austrasian mayor. The latter recognized Theodoric III as king. Waratto, however, was overthrown by his son, Gislemar, who was soon at war with Austrasia. Pepin's forces were defeated by the Neustrians in a battle at Namur in 683. Gislemar died soon afterwards, and his father, Waratto, again became mayor of the palace in Neustria. As long as the latter lived, relations between Neustria and Austrasia were friendly. Upon his death in 686, however, the Neustrian nobles divided into two factions - those who proclaimed as mayor of the palace a noble named Berthar, who supported the policy of Ebroin and Gislemar, and those who favored Pepin d'Heristal. In 687, Pepin marched against Neustria and meeting Berthar's army at Tertry,² won a decisive victory over it.³

Although Pepin was now in full control of Gaul, he recognized the king, Theodoric III, who was the nominal ruler of all the Franks. In 691, Clovis III became king, in 695, Childebert III, and in 711, Dagobert III. These kings were permitted no share whatever in the government.⁴ Pepin had two sons, Drogo and Grimoald. To the elder, Drogo, he gave the duchy of Champagne, and arranged for him to succeed to the position of Austrasian mayor of the palace. He made Grimoald mayor of the palace in Neustria. His sons, however, did not survive him, Drogo dying in 708 and Grimoald falling victim to a pagan assassin in 714. Grimoald left a young son, Theodebald, whom Pepin appointed mayor of the palace in Neustria. Drogo's two sons,

1. Hodgkin: Italy and her Invaders, vol. 7, p. 43.

2. Department of Somme.

3. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 167.

4. Funck-Brentano: The Earliest Times, p. 302.

Arnulf and Hugo, were to succeed their grandfather in Austrasia.¹

Pepin succeeded in re-establishing Frankish sovereignty over the Germanic peoples east of the Rhine, who, after the death of Dagobert I, had proclaimed their independence. Starting in 689, he sent expeditions against the Frisians, who inhabited the territory between the Ems and the Meuse.² Finally, he won a decisive victory over their chief, Ratbod, at Durestede, near Utrecht. Pepin's son, Grimoald, married one of Ratbod's daughters. For the last twenty years of Pepin's life, there was peace between the Franks and the Frisians.³

Pepin d'Heristal died in 714 and was succeeded by his grandsons: Theodebald, Arnulf and Hugo. These successors to the position of mayor of the palace in Neustria and Austrasia were children, hence their grandmother, Plectruda, the widow of Pepin, governed in their name.⁴ Pepin, however, had another son, Charles Martel, whose birth was illegitimate. The latter was approximately twenty-six years of age when his father died. Realizing that Charles constituted a threat to her power, Plectruda had him imprisoned immediately after his father's death.⁵

In 715, civil war broke out between Neustria and Austrasia. The Neustrians replaced the Austrasian child, Theodebald, who was their mayor of the palace, with Ragenfred, a Neustrian, and declared war on Theodebald and Plectruda. In a battle which took place near Compiègne, the Austrasians were defeated by the Neustrians. The Neustrian king, Chilperic II, who had succeeded Dagobert III on the death of the latter in 715, and Ragenfred, his mayor of the palace,

1. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 168.

2. Ibid., p. 168.

3. Hodgkin: Italy and her Invaders, vol. 7, p. 46.

4. Lavissee: op. cit., p. 257.

5. Ibid., p. 258.

allied themselves with the Frisian, Ratbod. The Neustrians advanced to the Meuse, then to Cologne, where they besieged Plectruda. Upon receiving from the latter a considerable portion of the treasure accumulated by Pepin, they returned to Neustria.¹ In 716, Pepin's son, Charles, escaped from prison and managed to gather around him his father's leudes. Attacking the Frisians, who had sailed up the Rhine, he was defeated by Ratbod.² However, he inflicted a defeat on the Neustrians at Ablève, near Malmédy, and recovered his father's treasure, which they had obtained in Cologne. The following year, 717, Charles won a decisive victory over the Neustrian forces at Vincy, near Cambrai. He conquered Paris and, returning to Cologne, received from Plectruda the remainder of his father's treasure. Charles' position as mayor of the palace in Austrasia was now acknowledged.³

Aquitaine had become virtually independent and was ruled by its duke, Eudo. The latter was allied with Neustria, to which he gave powerful support. In 719, the combined forces of Neustria and Aquitaine were routed by Charles near Soissons. Eudo fled to Aquitaine. Charles was now ruler of Neustria as well as Austrasia. The Austrasian king, Clotair IV, having died, Charles recognized the nominal sovereignty of the Neustrian, Chilperic II. Upon his disappearance the following year, the latter was succeeded by Theodoric IV.⁴

In 711, the Saracens began their invasion of Europe. Crossing the Straits of Gibraltar, they entered Spain, overthrowing the monarchy of the Visigoths. They entered Gaul in 716, and four years later, in 720, conquered the old Gothic territory of Septimania.

1. Hodgkin: Italy and her Invaders, vol. 7, p. 50.

2. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 258.

3. Hodgkin: op. cit., p. 51.

4. Lavissee: op. cit., p. 258.

This same year, they besieged Toulouse, but were repelled by Eudo. However, by 725, the Saracens had advanced as far as Autun in Burgundy.¹ The war between Eudo and Charles continued, the latter invading Aquitaine twice in 731. To defend himself against Charles, Eudo became the ally of a Saracen chief named Munuza, to whom he gave his daughter, Lampegia, in marriage. Munuza, who apparently was attempting to establish an independent state in Spain, was overthrown in 732 by Abd el-Rhaman, the Saracen governor of Spain. The latter then invaded Aquitaine. The Saracen force, which had devastated the territory it had traversed, reached Bordeaux. Eudo attempted to save the city, but suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of the Moslem invaders. He was obliged to ask his former enemy, Charles Martel, for assistance. Meanwhile, reaching Poitiers, the Saracens burned the church of St. Hilary, which was situated outside the city walls. The city itself resisted the invaders who, instead of besieging it, headed for Tours. Marching against the Moslems, Charles encountered them at Cenon, near Poitiers. The Battle of Poitiers took place on October 17th, 732. There was great loss of life on both sides. At nightfall, the fighting ceased. At daybreak, the Franks prepared to attack the Moslem camp, but found that during the night the invaders had fled.² The victory of Charles at Poitiers saved Gaul from Moslem domination.

Upon the death of Eudo in 735, his son, Hunald, succeeded him as independent ruler of Aquitaine. Charles demanded an oath of loyalty from Hunald. Upon the refusal of the latter to comply with this demand, Charles invaded Aquitaine and re-established Frankish dominion over Southern Gaul.³

The Moslems were still in control of Septimania, and in 737,

1. Hodgkin: Italy and her Invaders, vol. 7, p. 52.

2. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 260.

3. Ibid., p. 261.

seized Avignon and Arles in Provence. This same year, Charles recaptured Avignon, and crossing the Rhone, defeated the Saracens in a battle near Narbonne. He did not succeed in taking Narbonne, but did capture Nîmes and Agde. The next year, 738, all of Provence was recaptured by the Franks. Septimania, however, remained in the hands of the Moslems.¹

The puppet king, Theodoric IV, died in 737 and was not replaced during the lifetime of Charles Martel. In 741, Pope Gregory III sent an embassy to Charles, asking for his assistance against the Lombards in Italy. Charles refused this request, since, as Funck-Brentano² points out, he did not know the strength of the Lombards, and he was afraid of another Saracen offensive. Charles Martel died in October, 741.³

A few months before his death, Charles divided the territory under his control among his three sons - Carloman, Pepin the Short, and Grifo. Carloman was given Austrasia, Thuringia and the Alemannic territory. Pepin received Burgundy, Neustria and Provence. Grifo, who was illegitimate, did not at first receive a share in his father's territory. However, the protests of his mother, Swanahild, finally obtained for him a portion of each of the three kingdoms of Austrasia, Neustria and Burgundy.⁴

Soon after the death of Charles, a quarrel broke out between Grifo and his two brothers, in addition to revolts in Aquitaine, Bavaria and the Alemannic territory. Marching against Grifo, Carloman and Pepin captured and imprisoned him. In 742, they marched against Aquitaine, causing much devastation and returning home with

1. Hodgkin: Italy and her Invaders, vol. 7, p. 58.

2. Funck-Brentano: The Earliest Times, p. 305.

3. Hodgkin: op. cit., p. 59.

4. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 266.

considerable booty. Alemania, too, was devastated and brought into subjection. The Bavarian forces were defeated on the banks of the Lech,¹ and in 744, surrendered to the Franks. Meanwhile, the Aquitanian duke, Hunald, invaded Neustria, burning the city of Chartres. After conquering the Germanic peoples east of the Rhine, Pepin and Carloman marched against Hunald. The latter, who was able to offer no resistance, entered upon a monastic life and was succeeded by his son, Waifar, in 745.²

Carloman and Pepin also turned their attention to combatting the state of disorder which then existed among the Frankish clergy. The evils to be found among this clergy were many and varied. Bishoprics were bought by nobles who spent their time hunting, or in the army, and who were always ready to increase their domains by force. These "bishops" also frequently looted monasteries and convents. In the monasteries themselves, the monks would often revolt against their abbots. Ecclesiastical councils were held more and more rarely. Charles Martel was in a large measure responsible for these disorders, since he had had no scruples about using ecclesiastical appointments to reward his followers for their services. Under the reform carried out by Pepin and Carloman, a council was held each year; every priest had to give an accounting of his actions to his bishop twice a year; and members of the clergy were forbidden to bear arms, to hunt, or to go to war.³

In 747, Carloman confided his territory and his children to Pepin, and then left for Rome, where he entered holy orders. He founded a monastery at Monte Soracte, in Etruria, but since he attracted many visitors, he soon left it and entered the monastery

1. A river in Bavaria.

2. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 267.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 268.

at Monte Cassino.¹

Thus, Pepin the Short became the sole ruler of the Franks. There had been a Frankish king since 743, when Pepin and Carloman had placed Childeric III on the throne. However, this last of the Merovingian rulers was, as his predecessors for the past century, a mere cipher. Nevertheless, as Lavissee² points out, these kings were respected by the Franks. Therefore, powerful as Pepin was, he was afraid to usurp the title of king without the sanction of the Church. To obtain this sanction, he sent Pope Zacharias an embassy composed of Fulrad, the abbot of Saint-Denis, and Burchard, bishop of Wurzburg. These clerics were to consult with the pope on the subject of kings whose rule was only nominal. The pope, fully aware of the services which Pepin could render to the Church, replied that he who actually wielded the power of government should have the title of king.

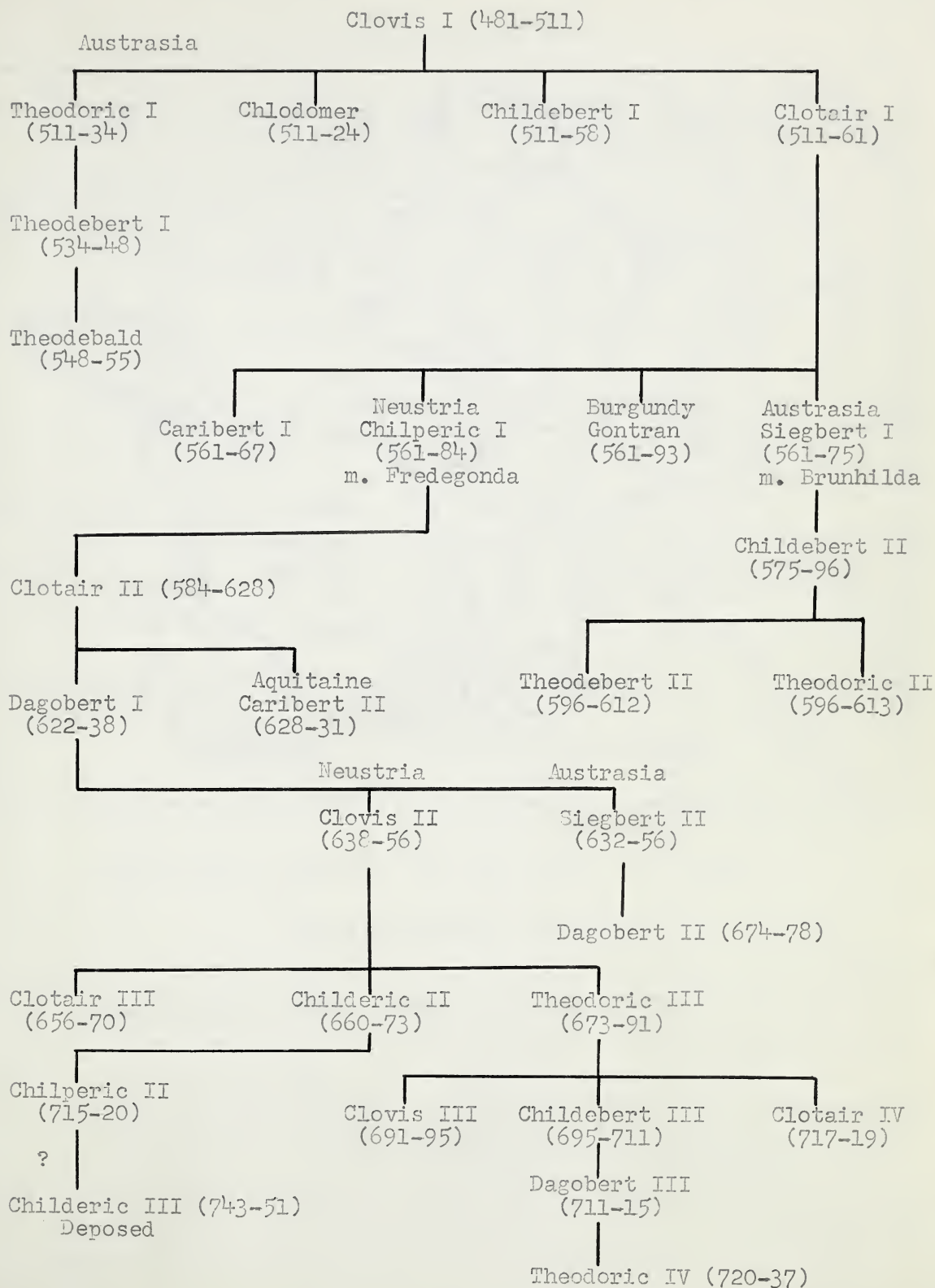
As soon as Pepin received the pope's reply on the subject of fainéant rulers, he had himself elected to the position of king of the Franks by an assembly which he convoked at Soissons in November, 751.³ Thus began the rule of the Carolingian dynasty. Childeric III, the last of the Merovingians, and his son, Theodoric, were sent to the monasteries of Saint-Bertin and Saint-Wandrille respectively.

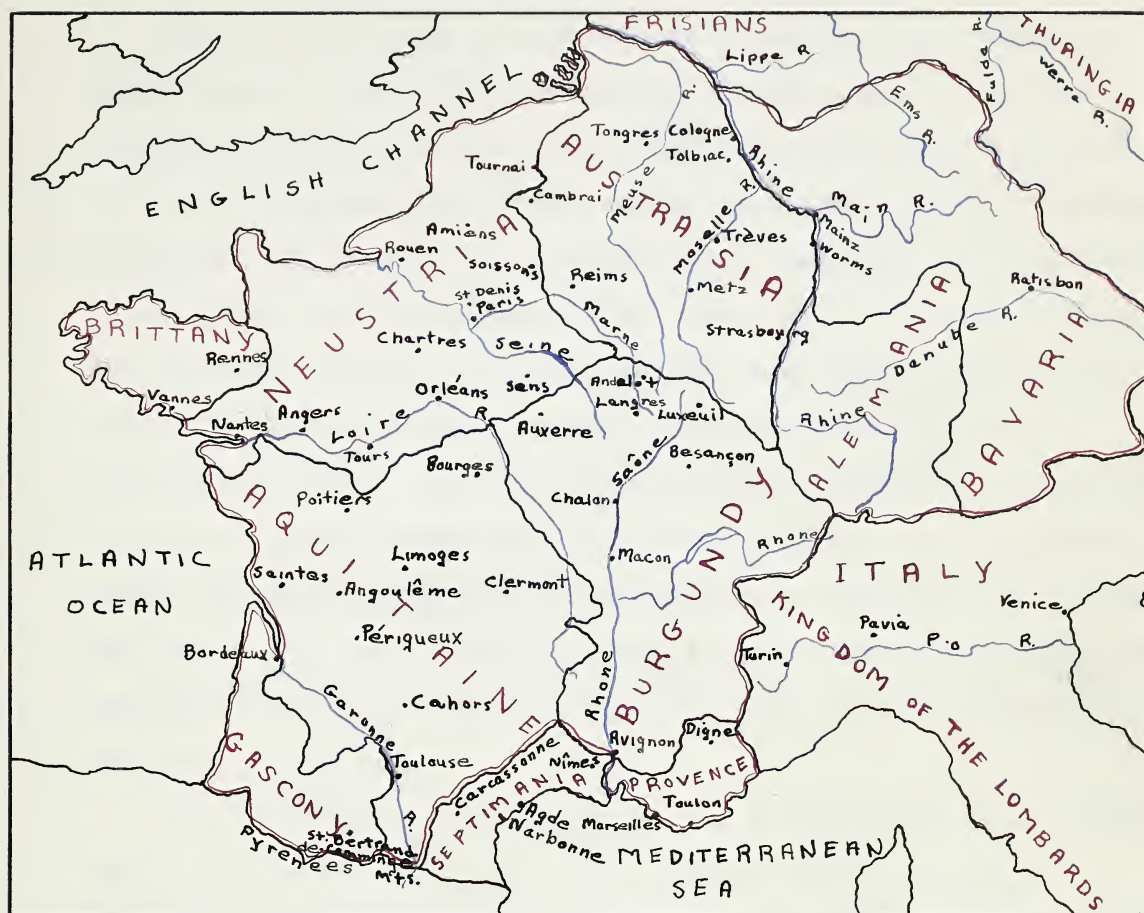
1. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 270.

2. Ibid., p. 271.

3. Ibid., p. 272.

Genealogical Table of the Merovingians
(Hodgkin: Italy and her Invaders, vol. VII)





WESTERN EUROPE AT THE END OF THE
MEROVINGIAN PERIOD.

FRANKISH TERRITORY —————

IV

THE CAROLINGIANS

Upon his election as king of the Franks in 751, Pepin the Short became in name what he and his predecessors for the past century had been in actual fact. Pepin's election was confirmed in 752 when he and his wife were crowned at Soissons by St. Boniface, archbishop of Cologne. The coronation was repeated two years later, in July 754, by Pope Stephen II at Saint-Denis.¹ In crowning Pepin, his wife and children, the pope forbade the Franks, on pain of excommunication, to select a king from any other than the Carolingian family. The pope also conferred upon Pepin and his two sons the title of Roman Patrician. The patrician was originally the Roman emperor's delegate in the territory in which he was established. The patriciate had, however, become a purely honorary dignity, and moreover, as Funck-Brentano² points out, one which the pope had no authority to confer.

The pontiff had not undertaken the journey from Rome to Saint-Denis merely for the purpose of bestowing dignities upon the Frankish king, but rather, to obtain the latter's assistance against the Lombards, who had seized the exarchate of Ravenna and the Pentapolis,³ and were threatening Rome. Pepin promised the pope to do all in his power to liberate the territory seized by the Lombards. His projected campaign against the Lombards meeting with considerable opposition from the Frankish nobles, Pepin tried to avoid an

1. Funck-Brentano: *The Earliest Times*, p. 317.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 317.

3. The exarchate of Ravenna and the Pentapolis consisted of that territory along the Adriatic coast of Italy which still owed allegiance to the Roman emperor at Constantinople. Included were the cities of Ravenna, Rimini, Pesaro, Faro, Cesena, Sinigaglia, Jesi, Forli, Urbino, Cagli, Gubbio, and Narni. (Lavis: *Histoire de France*, vol. 2, p. 275).

Italian expedition by sending a delegation to the Lombard king, Astolf, asking him not to march against Rome. The Lombard's reply being unfavorable, the Frankish army set out for Italy in 754, probably in August. The Lombard forces were defeated at Susa,¹ and the Franks advanced as far as Pavia, devastating the surrounding area. Astolf was constrained to sign a peace treaty whereby he promised to surrender the exarchate of Ravenna and the Pentapolis, and to refrain from attacking Rome. He even promised to pay the Frankish king an annual tribute. By one of the clauses of the treaty, the territory surrendered by the Lombards was to be handed over to the pope.² However, Astolf did not keep his promises. He refused to give up any territory, and in January 756, again besieged Rome. The pope wrote several letters to Pepin, asking for assistance which the Frankish nobles were unwilling to give. Finally, the Franks agreed to a second Italian expedition. Once more Frankish forces advanced as far as Pavia, and once more Astolf asked for peace, renewing the promises he had made in 754. This time, the terms of the treaty were carried out. The receipt of the promised territory by the pope instituted the Church States in Italy.³

Having successfully completed the Italian campaign, Pepin now turned his attention to areas which had long been trouble spots. In 758, he led his forces against the Saxons, who were finally brought into subjection and agreed to pay the Franks an annual tribute of three hundred horses.⁴ In 759, a Frankish force besieged Narbonne, in the old Gothic territory of Septimania. The inhabitants of Narbonne were promised that they would be permitted to keep their own separate laws if they surrendered their city to Pepin's forces.

1. In Piedmont.

2. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 275.

3. Ibid., p. 276.

4. Hodgkin: Italy and her Invaders, vol. 7, p. 270.

Rising against the Saracens who controlled the city, the Gothic population handed it over to the Franks. Thus was ended the Moslem domination over Southern Gaul.¹

In 760 began Pepin's war against Aquitaine, which was to last for eight years. According to Hodgkin,² the pretext for beginning the war was the refusal of the Aquitanian duke, Waifar, to restore to a number of churches under Pepin's special protection the property which belonged to them in Aquitaine. Marching against Aquitaine in 760, the Frankish king devastated the province of Berry. The following year, Waifar invaded Burgundy. Pepin seized Clermont, and in the spring, Bourges. Waifar had the cities of Poitiers, Limoges, Saintes, Périgueux, and Angoulême demolished in order to prevent the Frankish forces from making use of them. The Aquitanian forces attacked Septimania and the provinces of Lyonnais and Touraine. Limousine and the neighboring districts were laid waste by the Franks. In 763, the latter advanced as far as Issoudun,³ reached the Vézère⁴ and possibly Cahors. The Aquitanian forces were defeated, and Waifar barely managed to escape.⁵ It was at this time that Pepin's nephew, Tassilo, Duke of Bavaria, renounced his allegiance to the Franks, and with his forces returned to Bavaria. Waifar took advantage of Tassilo's defection to demand restitution of those cities seized by the Franks. Pepin refused this demand, but, for a period of two years, discontinued hostilities against Aquitaine. The war was resumed in 766, and in March 767, Aquitaine was taken by the Franks, who attacked from Septimania. Pepin left Aquitaine to return in August with his wife and children, who took

1.Hodgkin: Italy and her Invaders, vol. 7, p. 270.

2.Ibid., p. 271.

3.Department of Indre.

4.A river with its source in the mountains of Limousine.

5.Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 277.

up residence in Bourges. The Frankish king then set out in pursuit of Waifar, who had taken refuge in Southern Aquitaine. However, at the approach of winter, Pepin returned to Bourges, and his army went into winter quarters in Burgundy. The pursuit of Waifar began again in February 768. Finally, the Aquitanian duke was killed and his family captured.¹

Pepin was ill when he left Aquitaine. Realizing upon his arrival at Saint-Denis that he had not much longer to live, the Frankish king summoned his nobles, that he might divide his realm between his two sons, Charles, who later became known as Charlemagne, or Charles the Great, and Carloman, in their presence and with their consent. Charlemagne was to receive Austrasia, that part of Neustria to the north of the Oise, and Aquitaine, except for the province of Bourges. Pepin designated as Carloman's territory Burgundy, Provence, Septimania, Alsace, Alemannia, Thuringia, Hesse, Neustria south of the Oise, and that portion of Aquitaine which had not been assigned to Charlemagne. Pepin died in September 768, and was buried in the abbey of Saint-Denis.²

Pepin's realm was divided among his two sons, Charlemagne and Carloman, as he had arranged before his death. That the two brothers were incapable of concerted action was clearly demonstrated in the case of the revolt which broke out in Aquitaine in 769. A certain Hunald³ attempted to set himself up as king of Aquitaine. Charlemagne asked for his brother's support in putting down the Aquitanian revolt, but was refused this assistance. Since the

1. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 278.

2. Ibid., p. 278.

3. According to Funck-Brentano (The Earliest Times, p. 325), this was Duke Hunald, Waifar's father, who had entered a monastery in 745. Lavissee (op. cit., p. 281) states, however, that this Hunald was not the duke by the same name, as the latter had died in Rome in 756.

revolt did not affect his own portion of Aquitaine, Carloman took no interest whatever in crushing it. Charlemagne marched against Hunald. The latter took refuge with Lupus, Duke of Gascony, who, however, handed him over to Charlemagne upon being ordered by the latter to do so. The revolt crushed, Charlemagne returned home.¹

Carloman favored the Lombards, while Charlemagne supported the pope. Their mother, Bertha, tried to bring about a reconciliation between the two. Her plan was to have Charlemagne marry Désirée (Desiderata), the daughter of the Lombard king, Didier (Desiderius). The marriage took place in 770, Charlemagne repudiating Himiltrude, whom he had previously married.² However, the marriage of Charlemagne and Désirée was not of long duration, the Lombard princess being repudiated in 771.³ Carloman died in December 771, and his leudes, passing over his sons, proclaimed his brother, Charlemagne, as their king.⁴ Thus, the latter became the sole ruler of the Franks.

In 773, Charlemagne undertook his first campaign against the Lombards. It was the ambition of the Lombard king, Didier, to set up in Italy a kingdom similar to that of the Franks in Gaul. Therefore, after the death of Pepin, he attacked central Italy, seizing the cities which the Frankish king had given to Pope Stephen II. Charlemagne, receiving an appeal from Pope Hadrian I for assistance against the Lombards, twice sent embassies to Didier, asking him to surrender the church lands he had seized. The Lombard king refused to do this, so Charlemagne set out with his troops for Italy. The Frankish king once more tried to negotiate the surrender

1. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 281.

2. Ibid., p. 281.

3. Hodgkin: Charles the Great, p. 89.

4. Sergeant: The Franks, p. 219.

of the church territory by the Lombards, and again failed in his attempt. However, Didier's army, panic-stricken at the approach of the Franks, fled. The Lombard king took refuge in Pavia, where he was besieged by the Frankish forces.¹ According to Hodgkin,² the siege of Pavia began about the end of September 773 and lasted for ten months. Leaving the major portion of his army at Pavia, Charlemagne proceeded to Verona, the other centre of Lombard resistance. It was at Verona that Carloman's widow, Gerberga, and children had taken refuge. The garrison of the city, under the command of Didier's son, Adelchis, offered only slight resistance to the besieging Franks. The city soon surrendered. Adelchis escaped to Constantinople. No more was heard of Gerberga and her children. Hodgkin takes the stand that their lives were spared by Charlemagne, since, if they had been put to death, that fact would have been recorded.³

Charlemagne returned to his forces besieging Pavia, and from there directed the capture of the cities on the left bank of the Po. In the spring of 774, the Frankish king left for Rome, reaching that city on Easter Saturday. The following Wednesday, Charlemagne confirmed the donation of territory made by his father, Pepin, to Pope Stephen II and his successors, and drew up a new donation more extensive than that of Pepin.⁴ Hodgkin⁵ points out that this alleged donation, which would have made the pope sovereign of two thirds of Italy, never became an accomplished fact.

Charlemagne returned to his position before the city of Pavia. The city surrendered to the besieging Frankish forces in June 774.

1. Lavissee: *Histoire de France*, vol. 2, p. 282.

2. Hodgkin: *Charles the Great*, p. 94.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 95.

4. Lavissee: *op. cit.*, p. 283.

5. Hodgkin: *Italy and her Invaders*, vol. 7, p. 379.

The Lombard king, Didier, who was taken prisoner, ended his days in a monastery. Charlemagne seized the royal treasure and took the title of king of the Franks and Lombards.¹ The Lombards, however, had not been brought completely under subjection. Arachis, son-in-law of Didier, and Duke of Benevento, remained independent. The Frankish army having departed, Hildebrand, Duke of Spoleto, plotted with Hrodgaud and Reginald, Dukes of Friuli and Chiusi, to seize Rome and re-establish the Lombard kingdom in Italy. Once more the pope appealed to Charlemagne for assistance. The latter arrived in Italy early in 776. Crushing the Lombard rebellion, he returned to his kingdom. However, the Duke of Benevento, Arachis, assumed the title of prince and had himself crowned. The Frankish king returned to Italy in 777 and Arachis surrendered to him. Upon the death of Arachis, his son, Grimoald, was permitted by Charlemagne to succeed his father as Duke of Benevento. Grimoald became a tributary of the Frankish king.²

In 787, Charlemagne led an expedition against Bavaria. Ever since the Bavarian duke, Tassilo, had deserted Pepin in 763 during the latter's Aquitanian campaign, Bavaria, although nominally under Frankish rule, had been virtually an independent state. A reconciliation of Tassilo and Charlemagne had been brought about by Sturmi, the abbot of Fulda, probably around 769.³ Tassilo, however, assumed the title of king. Charlemagne could see Bavaria gradually slipping from his grasp. Therefore, in 781, Charlemagne and Pope Hadrian sent a joint embassy to Tassilo to warn the latter against taking any action contrary to his oath of fealty to the Frankish king. The Bavarian journeyed to Worms, where, in the king's presence,

1. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 283.

2. Ibid., p. 284.

3. Hodgkin: Italy and her Invaders, vol. 8, p. 99.

he re-affirmed his fealty. Charlemagne, however, doubted Tassilo's loyalty and in 787, sent another embassy to the Bavarian to remind him of his oath of allegiance and to summon him to his presence. Upon Tassilo's refusal to obey this summons, Charlemagne marched against him. The Bavarian duke, realizing that many of his own nobles would side with the Franks, surrendered his duchy to the latter. Charlemagne immediately restored Tassilo to his position of ruler of Bavaria, under Frankish suzerainty. The Bavarian duke again swore fealty to Charlemagne, who thereupon returned to his palace at Ingelheim on the Rhine.¹ However, the Frankish ruler soon suspected Tassilo of disloyalty, which was later confirmed (the Bavarian had conspired with the Avars against the Franks), and in June 788, summoned him to trial at Ingelheim. There, a general assembly consisting of representatives of all Charlemagne's subjects had been convoked. This assembly found Tassilo guilty of the charges of treason brought against him and condemned him to death. Charlemagne did not carry out this sentence, but instead, banished Tassilo to a monastery.² Thus, Frankish sovereignty over Bavaria was secured.

One of the most noteworthy events of Charlemagne's reign was his war against the Saxons, which began in 772 and lasted over thirty years. The Saxon confederacy consisted of four tribes - the Westphalians, Angarians, Eastphalians and Nordalbingians, The territory bounded by the Elbe on the east and extending nearly as far as the Rhine on the west, corresponding to modern Hannover, Brunswick, Oldenburg and Westphalia, was divided almost equally among the first three tribes, the Westphalians and Eastphalians

1. Hodgkin: Italy and her Invaders, vol. 8, p. 103. Ingelheim is near Mainz.

2. Ibid., p. 105.

occupying the western and eastern portions respectively, and the Angarians the central portion. The Nordalbingians occupied the area beyond the Elbe, corresponding approximately to the modern duchy of Holstein.¹ The Saxons were pagans.

At an assembly of the Franks held at Worms in July 772, Charlemagne decided to attack the Saxons. Entering Angarian territory, his army captured the fortress of Eresburg. Proceeding northward, the Frankish force came upon a sacred grove, in the midst of which stood an extremely large tree trunk. This was the idol known as the "Irminsul," which was worshiped by the Saxons of the surrounding district. Round about stood shelters containing gold and silver. The Franks destroyed the idol and the shelters and carried away the treasure. Charlemagne then advanced as far as the Weser, where he had an interview with one of the Angarian chiefs, from whom he received hostages in token of submission. The Saxons took advantage of Charlemagne's Italian campaign in 774 to devastate Hesse, sacking the monastery of Fritzlar, which had been founded by St. Boniface. In September of the same year, the Frankish king sent against the Saxons four separate forces which returned to Gaul laden with booty.²

Charlemagne spent the winter of 774-5 in his palace at Quierzy, on the Oise, and there decided to wage war against the Saxons until they were either conquered and converted to Christianity, or annihilated.³ In August 775, he led his forces across the Rhine, attacking all of the Saxon tribes except the Nordalbingians. The Angarians, who were concentrated at Brüniberg on the left bank of the Weser, were dispersed by the Franks. The Westphalians and

1. Hodgkin: Charles the Great, p. 104.

2. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 286.

3. Hodgkin: op. cit., p. 109.

Angarians surrendered. Charlemagne was on his way back to Gaul when he learned that the rearguard of his army had been surprised by the Saxons at Lübeck and largely massacred. He attacked the Westphalians, killing many, taking booty and demanding hostages. The next year, 776, while Charlemagne was in Italy, there was an uprising in the northern portion of Westphalia and Angaria. However, upon the arrival of the Frankish king, the rebels surrendered, promising to adopt the Christian religion. Thus, the first of the mass baptisms of Saxons took place.¹

In 777, Charlemagne held an assembly at Paderborn, which was attended by all the Frankish nobles and also by nearly all the chiefs of the Saxon tribes. This assembly saw the baptism of a large number of Saxons. However, Widukind, a Westphalian chief, who was to play a prominent part in Saxon resistance to the Franks, was not present.² Of Widukind's resistance, Lavissee writes:

Au cours de la lutte qu'il va conduire, sa présence n'est certaine dans aucune bataille, mais son influence se fait sentir partout; il est sans cesse en marche à travers le pays, provoquant la révolte. Mais il ne réussit pas à éveiller chez ses compatriotes le sentiment national. Jamais les Saxons ne se réunirent dans un soulèvement général contre l'envahisseur.³

In 778, the Saxons, hearing that Charlemagne had led his forces into Spain, rose under the leadership of Widukind and advanced as far as the Rhine. They did not cross the river, but devastated the right bank from Deutz to Coblenz. Hearing of this invasion of Frankish territory, Charlemagne sent a squadron against the invaders. The Frankish troops caught up with the Saxons at the Eder River, and inflicted upon them heavy casualties.⁴ In the spring of 779,

1. Lavissee: *Histoire de France*, vol. 2, p. 287.

2. Hodgkin: *Charles the Great*, p. 111.

3. Lavissee: *op. cit.*, p. 287.

4. Hodgkin: *op. cit.*, p. 112.

Charlemagne penetrated far into Saxon territory. The following year, the Franks advanced to the Elbe, and the inhabitants of the eastern portion of Eastphalia and part of the Nordalbingians were baptized. There were no hostilities between the Franks and Saxons in 781. In July 782, Charlemagne held an assembly at the sources of the Lippe, and the Saxons attended in great number. The Frankish king believed that the subjugation of the Saxons had at last been completed. However, he was soon to realize that this was far from being the case. This same year, back in Gaul, he learned that a Slavonic tribe, the Sorabi, which was established between the Elbe and the Saale, had invaded the neighboring portions of Saxon and Thuringian territory. The Frankish king conceived the plan of sending against these invaders an army composed not only of Frankish soldiers, but also of Saxons. This force was under the command of three Frankish courtiers - Adalgisus, Geilo and Worad. Entering Saxon territory and learning that a Saxon force, at the instigation of Widukind, was preparing to invade Gaul, the three Frankish generals abandoned their expedition against the Sorabi and instead, led their troops against the rebel Saxon force. According to Hodgkin,¹ the Saxon element of the Frankish army had deserted. The Franks attacked the Saxon camp on Mount Suntal, near Minden,² and were all but annihilated.³ Upon hearing of the Saxon rising and the defeat of his three generals, Charlemagne led a large force against the Saxons. Crushing their resistance, he summoned before him all the Saxon chiefs and demanded to know who had instigated the revolt. All the chiefs named Widukind, who, however, had fled to Denmark. Since Charlemagne couldn't wreak his vengeance on Widukind, he decided

1. Hodgkin: Charles the Great, p. 114.

2. Westphalian city on the Weser.

3. Hodgkin: op. cit., p. 115.

that the latter's accomplices must suffer. Therefore, 4500 men who had played a prominent part in the revolt were handed over to the Frankish king who had them all beheaded at Verden, on the banks of the Aller.¹

After his massacre of the Saxon rebels at Verden in 782, Charlemagne promulgated an edict providing the death penalty for those Saxons who were disloyal to the king; entered a church by force, and set fire to it or robbed it; killed a bishop or priest; continued to practise the rites of paganism; refused baptism; or failed to observe Church fasts. The edict obliged the Saxons to have their children baptized within their first year of life, and forbade them to assemble unless summoned by authority of the king.²

In the spring of 783, immediately after the funeral of his wife, Hildegard, whom he had married after his repudiation of Désirée, Charlemagne led a strong force against the Saxons, winning decisive victories over them in battles at Detmold and Osnabrück, and spreading devastation from the Weser to the Elbe. Upon his return to Gaul, he married Fastrada, the daughter of the Frankish count, Radolf.³ The following year, 784, Charlemagne's son, Charles, won a cavalry battle against the Saxons on the banks of the Lippe. The Frankish king spent the winter of 784-5 in Saxon territory, much of which he laid waste.⁴ It was towards the end of 785 that Widukind surrendered to Charlemagne and was baptized at Attigny.⁵ The Saxon was well received by the Frankish monarch, who acted as his godfather and also presented him with rich gifts.⁶ For the next

1. Hodgkin: Charles the Great, p. 116.

2. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 289.

3. Hodgkin: op. cit., p. 116.

4. Ibid., p. 117.

5. Department of Ardennes.

6. Lavissee: op. cit., p. 289.

seven years, there was peace between the Franks and Saxons. The latter were represented in Charlemagne's armies and in assemblies held by the Frankish monarch. However, their subjugation was not yet complete. In 793, when Charlemagne was preparing for a campaign against the Avars, he learned that the troops which Count Theodoric, a relation of his, was bringing him, had been annihilated while crossing the Weser. The Saxon rebels had also directed their fury against churches and clergymen. Thus, hostilities once more broke out. Until 799, Charlemagne's armies traversed Saxon territory, leaving destruction in their wake. From each of these expeditions, the Frankish king returned home with large numbers of Saxons, whom he would settle in Gaul. In 804, ten thousand Saxons were transported to Gaul from Wigmodia¹ and Nordalbingia, and their lands given to the Abodrites, a Slavonic people who had been faithful allies of Charlemagne.² At last, the conversion of the Saxons to Christianity was completed, and the long struggle between them and the Franks ended.

Other wars, besides that of the Saxons, filled Charlemagne's reign. In the spring of 778, he led his troops against the Saracens in Spain. The Franks captured Pamplona, Huesca and Girone, but were unable to take Saragossa. Charlemagne returned to Pamplona, the walls of which he destroyed to prevent the city from rebelling against him, and then began his northward journey into Gaul. It was on August 15th 778 that the rearguard of Charlemagne's army was ambushed and annihilated by the Basques in the narrow pass at Roncevalles, in the Pyrenees. It is this battle that is celebrated in the "Chanson de Roland." The Saracens then took the offensive.

1. The territory between Bremen and Hamburg.

2. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 290.

In October 788, Abd el-Rhaman, the caliph of Cordova, died and was succeeded by his son, Hescham, who resolved to conquer Septimania. In 793, Hescham's general, Abd el-Melec, invaded Gaul, burning the outlying parts of Narbonne. The Saracens then headed for Carcassonne. The Duke of Toulouse tried to stop them, but was defeated in a battle on the banks of the Orbieu, a tributary of the Aude. The Moslems returned to Spain with numerous captives and much booty.¹ In 796, Frankish troops ravaged Saracen territory. They besieged Huesca, but unsuccessfully. Barcelona was besieged in 801, and finally forced to surrender to the Franks. Between 809 and 811, three attempts were made to capture Tortosa, at the mouth of the Ebro River. The third attempt succeeded. According to Hodgkin,² these Frankish conquests were retained during Charlemagne's lifetime.

The Avars, who inhabited Pannonia,³ constituted a continual threat to the eastern frontier of Charlemagne's realm. In 788, they sent two armies against the Franks, one to Bavaria and the other to Friuli. However, both these forces were defeated.⁴ In 791, Charlemagne led his first expedition against the Avars. This was the only occasion on which the Frankish king personally led his troops against this people. Saxon and Frisian troops, under the command of Count Theodoric, followed the left bank of the Danube, and the Frankish forces, commanded by Charlemagne himself, the right bank. On September 8th, the combined force crossed the Pannonian frontier. The Franks spread devastation as far as the confluence of the Raab and the Danube, but met no opposition from the Avars. They were forced to turn back, however, when most of their horses were stricken with an epidemic and died. Charlemagne's son, Pepin, king of Italy,

1. Lavissee. *Histoire de France*, vol. 2, p. 294.

2. Hodgkin: *Charles the Great*, p. 151.

3. *Modern Hungary*.

4. Hodgkin: *op.cit.*, p. 156.

invaded Pannonia from the south and ravaged part of the country. In 795, the Duke of Friuli forced his way into the Avar capital, which was a rather remarkable encampment consisting of a series of walls in the form of concentric circles. In this city, the Franks found a vast treasure hoard, which was sent to Charlemagne at Aachen. According to Lavissee, the Frankish king gave part of this treasure to the pope and divided the rest among his courtiers.¹ The following year, Pepin returned to the Avar capital, where a considerable part of the treasure still remained. Pepin took this booty to his father at Aachen.² The Avars revolted again in 799, after it was thought that they had been conquered. However, they were constrained by Slavonic pressure to ask the protection of Charlemagne. In 809, they recognized his sovereignty.³

The Frankish king found that when he had conquered the Saxons, he had to protect them against the Slavs, who were continually at war with them. In 805, a force under the command of Charlemagne's eldest son, Charles, ravaged the territory of the Czechs in Bohemia, and the following year, that of the Sorabi, along the Saale and the Elbe.⁴

It was against the Danes that Charlemagne fought his last war. In June 810, he learned that a fleet of 200 Danish ships had devastated the coasts and islands of Frisia, and that troops had disembarked and forced the Frisians to give them large sums of money. There was a rumor that the Danish king, Gottfried, was planning the conquest of the territory to the south of his realm. Therefore, Charlemagne stationed troops at the confluence of the Aller and the Weser. Having arrived there, however, he learned that

1. Lavissee: *Histoire de France*, vol. 2, p. 296.

2. Hodgkin: *Charles the Great*, p. 162.

3. Lavissee: *op. cit.*, p. 296.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 297.

Gottfried had just been assassinated. The new Danish king, Hemming, concluded a peace treaty with the Franks.¹

Charlemagne realized the need of his realm for naval protection against piratical raids. In 800, he toured the seacoasts of his kingdom and had garrisons installed at coastal points. His son, Louis, king of Aquitaine, had ships constructed to protect the mouths of the Rhone and Garonne. In October 811, Charlemagne reviewed his fleet, which was assembled at Gent and Boulogne. The Frankish king provided for the defense of the land frontiers of his realm by the creation of "marches," each of which was simply a group of counties under the authority of a chief charged with its defense.²

It was on Christmas day in the year 800 that the title of Roman emperor was conferred upon Charlemagne. The conferring of this new dignity was brought about largely by events in Constantinople and Rome. In the former city, the emperor, Constantine VI, had been deposed and his throne taken over by his mother, Irene. Lavissee³ points out that the throne, occupied by a woman, could be considered vacant. In Rome, Pope Leo III, whose election to the papacy had been widely opposed, was attacked in the street in April 799 and severely wounded. According to Hodgkin, this incident definitely decided the pope in favor of bestowing the imperial dignity on Charlemagne.

After that fatal day, his reluctance, if he had any, to see one man in the Italian peninsula holding an indisputably higher position than his own, was changed into eager acquiescence in the scheme. He was willing, nay anxious, to see the purple robe encircling the stalwart

1. Lavissee: *Histoire de France*, vol. 2, p. 297.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 298.

3. Lavissee: *op. cit.*, p. 302. Lavissee states that Constantine, who was ordered blinded by Irene, died soon afterwards. According to Hodgkin (*Charles the Great*, p. 179), Constantine lived for more than twenty years after this mutilation.

limbs of the Frankish conqueror, if only he himself might take shelter under that robe from the dagger of the assassin.¹

The injured pontiff took refuge with Charlemagne at Paderborn. The Frankish monarch provided the pope with an escort to Rome, whither he himself journeyed late in 800. At Christmas mass in the basilica of St. Peter, Charlemagne was praying before the altar when the pope placed the imperial crown on his head, proclaiming him emperor of the Romans. According to Lavissee,² this action had been decided upon previously, and Charlemagne had been consulted. He did not, however, know that his coronation was going to take place at that particular time.

Also on December 25th, 800, Pope Leo crowned Charlemagne's eldest son, Charles. Pepin and Louis had been crowned kings of Italy and Aquitaine respectively, by Pope Hadrian in 781. Hodgkin³ suggests that Charles was probably crowned king of the Franks, that title being left open by his father's promotion to a higher dignity. Charlemagne was predeceased by two of his sons, Pepin dying in 810 and Charles in 811. In September 813, Charlemagne convoked a general assembly of the Franks at Aachen, and with their consent, transmitted to his remaining son, Louis, the title of Emperor, crowning him in the church on Sunday, September 11th. Charlemagne died on January 28th, 814, and was buried in the church at Aachen.⁴

Upon learning of the death of his father, Louis, who was in Aquitaine, immediately set out for Aachen, where he arrived on February 27th, 814. He was then thirty-six years of age.⁵ The new emperor was well named Louis the Pious by his contemporaries. Of the

1. Hodgkin: Charles the Great, p. 201.
2. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 303.
3. Hodgkin: Italy and her Invaders, vol. 8, p. 196.
4. Lavissee: op. cit., p. 330.
5. Ibid., p. 359.

character of Louis, Funck-Brentano writes:

He remained for hours prostrate on the stones of the churches muttering prayers and weeping. It had been his desire to become a monk like his great-uncle, Carloman, but Charlemagne had prevented him. Nevertheless Carloman always remained his ideal. And he was not mistaken with regard to his true vocation. For he was made for the peaceful life of an obedient monk, rather than for the government of a tumultuous state.¹

Although he had been crowned emperor by his father, Charlemagne, Louis had himself crowned again at Reims by Pope Stephen V in October 816. The following year, a general assembly was held at Aachen, and it was decided to divide the Frankish empire into kingdoms. Louis divided his empire among his three sons - Lothair, Pepin and Louis. Pepin received Aquitaine and Gascony, the march of Toulouse, the county of Carcassonne in Septimania and those of Autun, Avalon and Nevers in Burgundy. Louis received Bavaria, and the territory of the Carinthians, Bohemians, Avars and Slavs to the east of Bavaria. However, Lothair, the eldest, was to be his father's heir and the sole emperor, and during his father's lifetime, his "associate emperor." His two brothers were to be under his domination, forbidden to have any dealings with foreign nations, or even to marry without his consent. This act was approved by the pope, and all the inhabitants of the empire swore to respect it.²

Bernard, king of Italy and nephew of the emperor, rebelled against the latter's authority, and with his supporters, invaded Gaul. Louis led troops against Bernard, capturing him at Chalons-sur-Saône in December 817. Bernard was blinded and died a few days later.³

Brittany had always been a trouble spot and now felt strong enough to refuse obedience to the emperor, even setting up a Breton

1. Funck-Brentano: *The Earliest Times*, p. 381.

2. Lavissee: *Histoire de France*, vol. 2, p. 360.

3. Funck-Brentano, *op. cit.*, p. 386.

named Morman as their king. However, this revolt was crushed in 818, and Morman killed. Again in 824, Louis was obliged to put down an uprising in Brittany. Almost all the Breton chiefs were present at the general assembly held in Aachen in 825, and Brittany remained quiet until the end of Louis' reign.¹ There were risings among the Avars and Slavs, but these, too, were successfully put down.² Deciding to attempt to convert the Danes to Christianity, Louis sent the archbishop of Reims to the territory near the mouth of the Elbe. This attempt to spread Christianity had some success, as a Danish prince, Harald, arrived at the palace of Ingelheim with his wife, his son, and 400 of his followers, to be baptized in May 826.³

His wife, Hirmingarde, having died in 818, Louis the Pious married Judith, daughter of Count Welf of Bavaria, the following year. In 823 there was born to the emperor and empress a son, the future Charles the Bald. To give this infant son a share of his empire, Louis would have to break the constitution of 817. He obtained Lothair's consent to do this. However, his eldest son, at the instigation of the counts Hugue and Matfrid, reversed his decision. Nevertheless, at Worms in 829, Louis the Pious gave to his young son, Charles, Alemania, Alsace, Rhaetia, and part of Burgundy, along with ^{the} title of duke. Lothair was sent to Italy. The sons of the emperor were much annoyed by this gift of territory to young Charles. Judith was considered the cause of all the evil. Pepin and Lothair met in May 830 at Compiègne. Judith was obliged to enter a convent. However, by promising Pepin and Louis that he would increase their kingdoms, the emperor won their support

1. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol.2, p. 361.

2. Duruy: Histoire de France, vol. 1, p. 202.

3. Lavissee: op. cit., p. 362.

against Lothair. The assembly held at Nimègue in October 830 authorized the return of Judith from her convent. In February 831, a new division of the empire was made at Aachen. Italy remained in Lothair's possession, and the rest of the realm was divided into three parts - Pepin had Aquitaine, the territory between the Loire and the Seine, and beyond the latter river, the territory limited by the counties of Châlons-sur-Marne, Meaux, Amiens and Ponthion. Louis received Bavaria, Thuringia, Saxony, Frisia and Austrasia; his territory was limited on the west by the counties of Vermandois, Artois, and Boulonnais. Charles received Alemania, Burgundy, except for the part given to Pepin, Provence, Septimania, and the districts of Woëvre, Vouziers and Mézières, the counties of Reims, Laon, Moselle and Trèves. This partition of the empire caused new quarrels. Pepin and Louis demanded a share in the governing of the empire. Pepin refused to obey the emperor, who wanted to send him back to Aquitaine. Louis was opposed to the allotment of Alemania to Charles. Louis the Pious went to Augsburg and forced Louis to lay down his arms. Then he had Pepin imprisoned at Trèves and gave Aquitaine to Charles. Pepin, however, escaped, and his brothers rallied around him, Lothair arriving from Italy and Louis from Bavaria.¹

The emperor determined to resist his sons. Thus, on June 24th, 833, the two armies met in Alsace. An attempt was made at negotiation, but was not successful. A few at a time, the forces of Louis the Pious deserted their master and went over to his sons. By June 30th, the emperor was abandoned by all but a few followers. The plain in Alsace where this drama was enacted was henceforth known as the "Field of Lies" ("Champ du Mensonge;" "Lügenfeld"). In October of the same year, the unfortunate emperor was deposed and

1. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 363.

forced to enter a monastery. Judith was exiled at Tortona in Italy, and Charles was placed in the monastery of Prüm. There took place a new partition of the realm, which gave Louis Alemanian and Alsace. The government of the entire empire was in the hands of Lothair. However, the coalition formed against Louis the Pious soon began to totter. Public sentiment was strongly opposed to the dishonorable treatment of the father by his children. Also, Pepin and Louis, jealous of Lothair's authority, were conspiring against him. Both Louis and Pepin were working for the re-establishment of their father on the throne. By February 834, they had an army ready to march. Louis the Pious was freed on February 28th at Saint-Denis. Lothair withdrew. In August of the same year, Lothair surrendered to his father, swearing loyalty to him. The former then went to Italy. In February 835, Louis the Pious was formally re-established on his throne.¹

The emperor, who was dominated more and more by his wife, Judith, now had only one thought - to assure the succession of his youngest son, Charles, to his share of the realm. Towards the end of 837, he gave Charles Frisia, the territory between the Meuse and the Seine, and several counties in Burgundy. In September 838, he had him crowned king at Quierzy-sur-Oise, and added to his share of the realm the whole of Western Gaul between the Seine and Loire. The previous June, in the assembly at Nimègue, the emperor had taken from Louis Saxony, Thuringia, Austrasia and Alemanian.² He had intended to charge Pepin with the protection of young Charles. However, Pepin having died in December 838, he turned to Lothair, who for the past three years had been in Italy. The latter was

1. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 365.

2. Ibid., p. 366.

offered half the realm if he would act as the guardian of Charles. Lothair accepted and arrived at Worms on May 30th, 839. A few days later, the Carolingian empire was divided into two sections, the eastern portion, Austrasia, going to Lothair, who would also have the title of emperor, and the western portion, Neustria and Aquitaine, going to Charles.¹

Aquitaine, however, refusing to accept this last partition, had proclaimed as king Pepin II, son of their king, Pepin, who had recently died. The emperor set out for Aquitaine to constrain that territory to obedience, but arriving in Poitiers, he learned that Louis was trying to reconquer the territories recently taken from him. Thus, Louis the Pious was obliged to lead his forces against his son. The latter was forced to withdraw to Bavaria. On the way home, the emperor fell ill, and died in the neighborhood of Ingelheim on June 20th, 840. Louis the Pious was buried at Metz.²

Lothair, refusing to fulfill the conditions of the agreement he had entered into at Worms, claimed for himself the territory which had been his under the constitution of 817. Thus, Charles and Louis formed an alliance against Lothair, and all three brothers prepared for war. Lothair's partisans consisted of the majority of the Franks, and those Aquitanians who supported Pepin II; Alemanni, Saxons, Thuringians and eastern Franks rallied around Louis, and the Burgundians and the remainder of the Aquitanians around Charles.³ The two younger brothers spent the winter of 840-41 in assembling their troops. In the middle of June 841, they were in the district of Chalon-sur-Saône, and Lothair was in Auxerre. They sent the latter three successive embassies to attempt to negotiate a peace.

1. Funck-Brentano: *The Earliest Times*, p. 394.

2. Lavissee: *Histoire de France*, vol. 2, p. 366.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 367.

Lothair, however, asked for time to consider the matter, and thus gave his Aquitanian forces time to arrive on the scene. When the latter joined him on June 24th, he offered battle. This engagement took place at Fontenoy-en-Puisaye, south-west of Auxerre. Lothair's forces were routed by the arrival of Charles' ally, Count Warin, with the Burgundians. This battle, however, was not decisive. His two brothers having separated, Lothair tried to conquer them one after the other. In August, he prevented Louis from crossing the Rhine at Mainz. Then he turned his attention to Charles, who was established at Saint-Denis. However, the latter was too strongly entrenched to be moved from this position. Lothair then proceeded toward Aachen, arriving there early in February 842.

Charles and Louis resolved to bind themselves to each other by an oath. Thus, on February 14th, 842, in the plain of Strasbourg, they swore the celebrated oaths which bear this name. Louis, being the elder, swore first, in the Romanic language, in order to be understood by Charles' army:

Pro Deo amur et pro christian poblo et nostro commun salvament, d'ist di en avant, in quant Deus savir et podir me dunat, si salvarai eo cist meon fradre Karlo, et in adhiudha et cadhuna cosa, si cum om per dreit son fratra salvar dist, in o quid il mi altrez fazet; et ab ludher nul plaid numquam prindrai qui, meon vol, cist meon fradre Karle in damno sit.

For the love of God and the salvation of the people of Christendom and of ourselves, from this day forward, so long as God shall give me knowledge and power, yea indeed, I will support this my brother Charles with my help in all things, as one should by right support one's brother, and that he may do the same by me, and from Lothar I shall accept no plea which, by my connivance, shall be to the disadvantage of this my brother Charles.

Charles repeated the same oath, in German, for the benefit of Louis' army, which was mainly German-speaking. Then each of the two armies swore the following oath in their respective languages:

Si Lodhuwigs sacrament, que son fradre Karlo jurat, conservat, et Karlus, meos sendra, de suo part lo suon fraint, si io returnar non l'int pois, ne io ne neuls cui eo returnar int pois, in nulla aiudha contra Lodhuwig mun li ier.

If Louis keeps the oath he has sworn to his brother Charles but if Charles, my master, for his part, breaks his, and I cannot deter him from so doing, neither to him nor to any whom I cannot deter shall I be of any help against Louis.

Soon afterwards, Charles and Louis received ambassadors from Lothair, extending peace terms. These were accepted, and on June 15th, 842, on an island in the Saône, near Mâcon, the three brothers signed an agreement to suspend hostilities. The definitive partition of the empire was set forth in the Treaty of Verdun, which was concluded in August 843. By this treaty, Lothair received the Frankish territory in Italy, and a strip of territory about 150 miles wide, extending from the North Sea to the Alps and the Mediterranean. Louis received the Frankish territory situated to the east of the Rhine, with the districts of Spiers, Worms and Mainz on the left bank. The remaining territory, in Western Gaul, was given to Charles.¹ Lothair kept the title of emperor, but no longer had any authority over his brothers, who had become his equals.² This treaty began the separation of the modern French and German nations.

The Oaths of Strasbourg are quite as important from the literary point of view as they are from the historical, since they constitute the first document in the French language that has come down to us. Louis swore his oath in "Romanic" - the ninth century form of the Latin language in the western part of the Frankish empire. The Frankish invaders introduced into Gaul a Germanic

1. Funck-Brentano: The Earliest Times, p. 400.

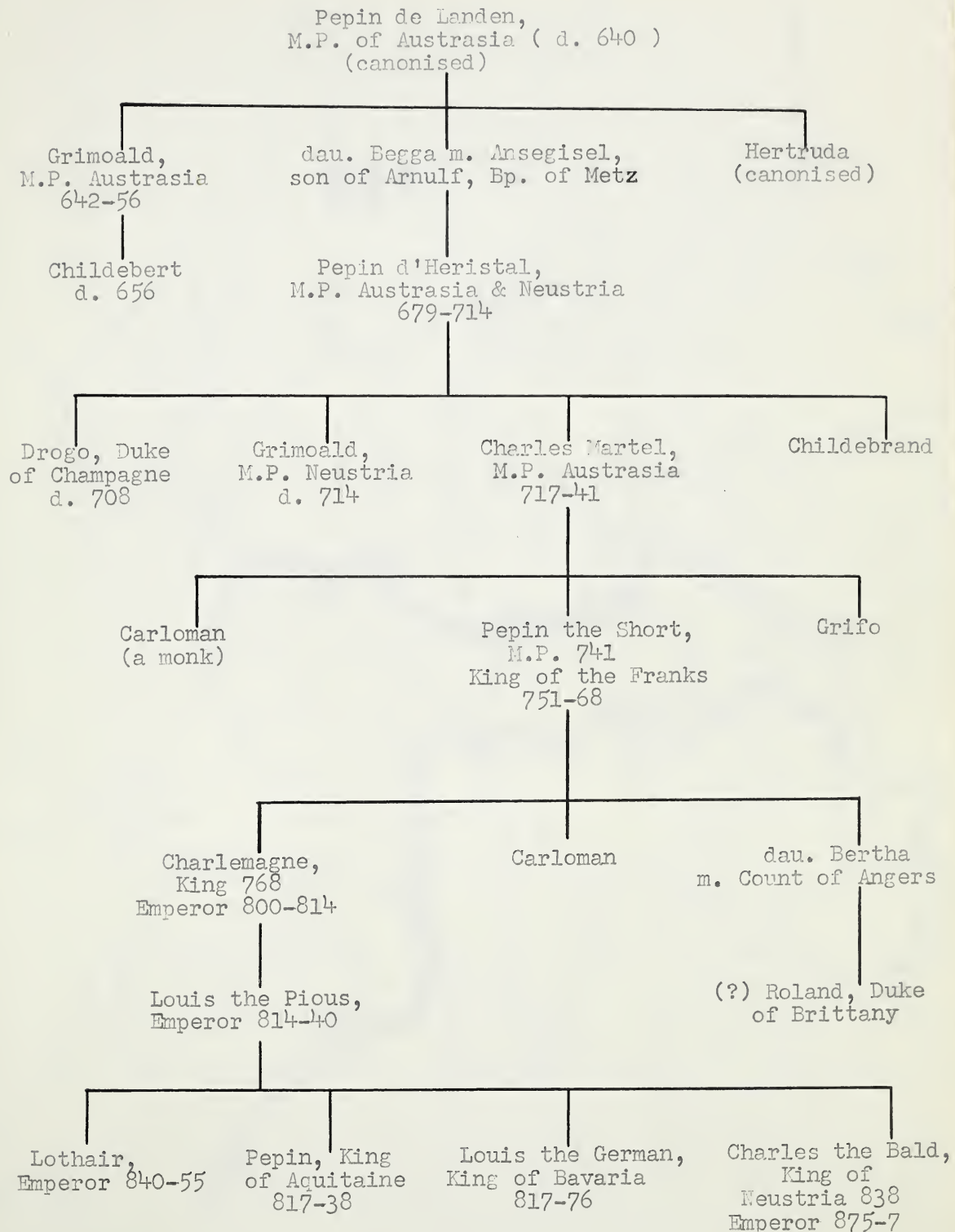
2. Lavissee: Histoire de France, vol. 2, p. 370.

tongue, which has left an indelible stamp on the modern French language.

The Frankish invaders supplied French with a number of terms, many of which survive. These relate to (1) military life, e.g. guerre (werra), garde (warda), guet (wahta), éperon (sporon), épieu (speot), gant (wantu, cf. Wanten 'shrouds'), heaume (helm), robe (rauba), hérald (*heri-wald), gonfalon (*gund-fano), O.Fr. eschier (*skara); (2) political life, e.g. fief (feudum), gage (vadium, from wadja), ban 'jurisdiction', O. Fr. pleige 'pledge' (*pliga), and dignitaries such as baron (cf. saci-baro in the Salic Law), sénéchal (*sini-skalk), maréchal (*marh-skalk), échançon (*skankjo), chambellan (*kamarling); (3) daily life, e.g. banc (bank), fauteuil (faldastöl), loge (laubja), canif (cf. Du. knijf), rôtir (raustjan), danser (dansōn); (4) agriculture, e.g. gerbe, haie (haga), houe (*houwa), houx (*huls), hêtre (*haistr); (5) miscellaneous qualities, etc. e.g. hâte (haifsta), orgueil (urgōli), honte (haunitha). The h- of haut is due to a blend of altus and hōh and the g- of gâter to one between vastare and *vastjan. Of adjectives, the commonest are riche (rikja), frais (frisk), gai (gāhi), and the colours blanc (blank), brun, bleu (blaw-), fauve (falw-), gris (gris). The verbs include gagner (*waidanjan), épargner (*sparanjan), choisir (*kausjan). In addition there are in North Eastern France many place names in -anges, -enges (Frankish -ingas, cf. the Burgundian -ingos, which gives -ans, -ens on the Swiss border).¹

1. Priebisch and Collinson: The German Language, p. 48.

Genealogical Table of the Carolingians



THE CAROLINGIAN EMPIRE

THE FRANKISH
EMPIRE IN 814 —

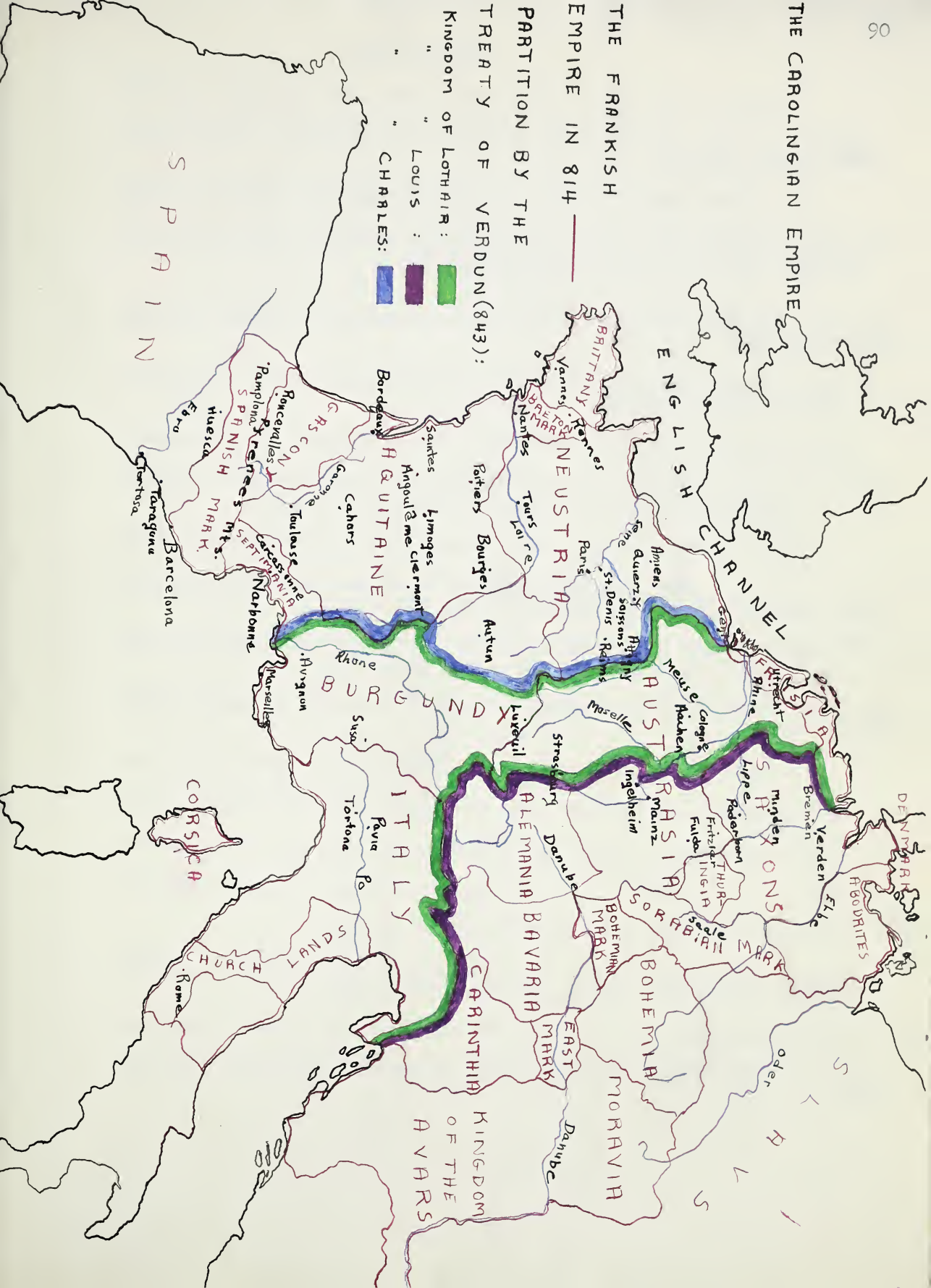
PARTITION BY THE

TREATY OF VERDUN (843):

KINGDOM OF LOTHAIR:

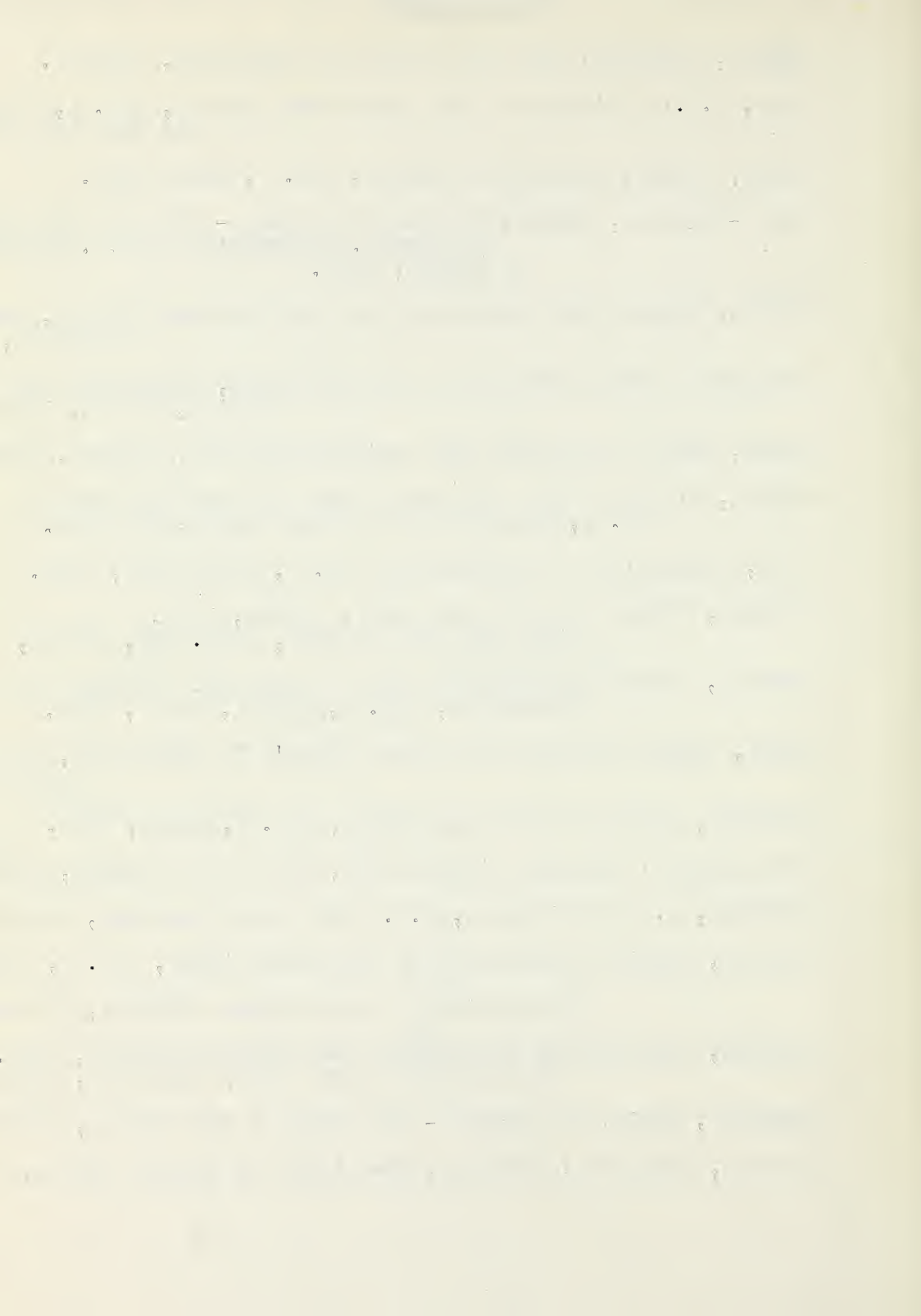
" LOUIS:

" CHARLES:



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